

FERENC IMREY

*Through Blood and Ice*



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# Through Blood and Ice

BY  
FERENC IMREY

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
LEWIS STANTON PALEN

*With Illustrations  
by the  
Author*



NEW YORK  
E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

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FIRST EDITION

## COLLABORATOR'S NOTE

Certain of the Buddhists in India hold that a subtle fluid, which they call *AKASA*, permeates all space surrounding the material world. On it are reflected and imprinted the events of all times and the thoughts of all creatures. Through the proper intuitional contact, achievable only after the attainment of advanced spiritual development, the masters are able to take off from these *AKASHIC* records the elements of universal knowledge.

If there be some such great reservoir of recorded history and human experiences of "*LE GROS DÉCADE*" of the twentieth century, it is fortunate, failing the ability of ordinary man to draw as he would from it, to have the chronicle of one who approached the world struggle from a distinctly different viewpoint from the average individual who carried rifle or sword.

Ferenc Imrey was a professor in charge of the life class in the Technical School of Applied Art in Budapest, at the moment that the world was called upon to maim and mangle the human form which he was instructing his pupils to study and depict as the acme of Time's attainment. Being "hopelessly unmilitary," he had earlier managed to get excused from the greater part of his compulsory service in the officers' training school, so that he had only the



rank of corporal, instead of the normal one of lieutenant, when the storm burst. Consequently, he was compelled to go into the line, as Fate's rude jest at his expense.

Entirely out of sympathy with his new artists' model, War, he now had always to see her strutting nude before him, Rubens-like and bestial in her debauched voluptuousness for man's life and his blood. The tables were turned. It was the artist who had to take his orders from the model. But he reserved the right to think of her wanton shamelessness as he chose and has given us in the following pages some of the life experiences that must certainly have gone to make up the more deeply etched *AKASHIC* records of his age.

L. S. P.

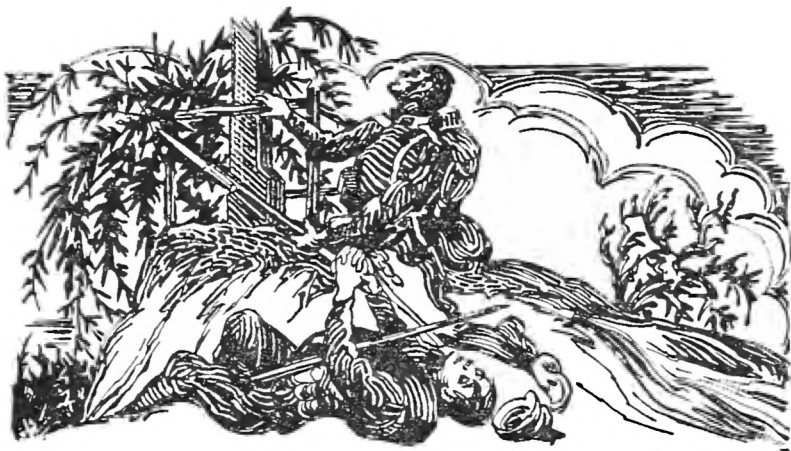
New York,  
November, 1929

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## CHAPTER I

### AS THE WORLD WENT MAD

THE Vienna-Paris express was winding its way in among the snow-covered valleys of the Tyrolean Alps. Through the soft evening light little groups of peasants could be seen following the steep paths that led past the stations of the cross up to the brilliantly lighted chapels at the foot of the mountain slopes to join in the services that culminated in the midnight mass—for it was Christmas Eve, the last Christmas Eve of what was to us the normal Europe of the past hundred years. As I gazed from the window of the restaurant-car on this Eve of the Nativity, the scene looked biblical and threw me into a mood of quiet, peaceful contemplation.

“Pardon, Monsieur, I am Count K—— and . . .” My reverie was broken. There were only two other passengers in the car, and we were all at different tables. Now one of my traveling companions was

standing before me. After his most courtly bow and introduction, he continued:

"Will you not do me the honor of supping with me on this Christmas Eve? It is a time when no one should sit alone."

"*Enchanté, Monsieur,*" I answered, entirely at one with him in feeling and delighted to have the opportunity of sharing my enthusiasm for the unusual pictures that were being run off for us through the car window. "And shall we not add that gentleman to our group?" I suggested, indicating the other single passenger in the car.

"With pleasure,"—and soon we were grouped around the Count's table. Our host's first inquiry sought to find the reason for our travel on such a night. He himself confessed that he had lost his wife only a month before and was seeking, by going to visit his daughter in Paris, to run away from the past that was now haunting him.

The third member of our group was an Armenian merchant who had even greater reason for being alone on this evening. His family had been massacred and he was trying to escape as far as possible from the scene of his despair.

With their stories told, I found their searching eyes turned to me to learn of my trouble. I had none. My answer was too baldly cruel to be mated with theirs. I was simply a professor in the Budapest School of Applied Art and was disregarding accepted conventions to take advantage of the Christmas holidays to indulge myself in my favorite pastime of winter sports in France. I was going first to Paris

to pass a day or two with my old friends on Montmartre. I had nothing but pleasure in mind and the enjoyment of all that was beautiful and diverting in the France of my student days.

The memory of those days was strong upon me at the moment, for this was my first trip back to the little group of writers, artists and sculptors with the freedom and independence incident to a regular income and the knowledge that there would be "bread and wine" for the morrow's meal. I was impatient to meet the companions with whom I had struggled and who now considered me almost a renegade to the realm of respectability, especially him whom we called "The Apostle."

He was a South American, a most unusual product of an English-Portuguese union. He had a viewpoint and an outlook on life that raised him above the world of which he was a part. When idle talk, especially anything bordering upon coarseness, held the board, he used to sit with a faraway look in his eyes, gazing out, as it were, into the space of a freed soul. Yet he never preened himself or gave the least impression of superiority. He had a fellow-feeling that reached far beyond the bounds of the radical mind, which too often finds subjects for pity or help only among the so-called downtrodden. For him the man of wealth and aristocracy, had he but the knowledge of his limitations and of the emptiness of his life, was as much one to elicit his sympathy and guidance as the very beggar. When the more frothy and superficial members of a gathering had taken themselves off, he would often talk to us



for hours. We counted at times as a visitor to our studio group the District Prefect of Police, a man whose keenness and knowledge of human nature made him an infallible judge of men. I could see in his expression, as he listened, an admitted recognition of the superior strength and power of this mild-mannered man.

It was into the hands of this, our Apostle, that I decided to commit my two traveling companions, when we arrived in Paris the following evening, certain that he would be able, if anyone could, to bring something approaching peace to their distraught minds.

The group was gathered, as the economic law of the Medes and Persians dictated, in the studio of a fortunate member who happened to have coal that day to heat with. While the Apostle talked with my friends, I reveled in the latest news of my old associates. For him who had served me as secretary during the few months of a period of opulence I was particularly concerned. He was a cripple and hated me for my six feet three of height and my proportionately rugged build; nor did he hesitate to tell me so.

He, however, served me well. He delivered my drawings to the publishers for whom I was making illustrations, he secured some orders also, but, most important of all, he succeeded marvelously in the collection of the scant funds that were due me for my work. Being both deaf and intermittently dumb, he was an almost irresistible "agent," because he never could hear a "No" and he always took it for

granted that his demands were being met. If ever he made any errors of accounting, they were invariably in our favor.

As a social companion he was not always so great a success. I used to take him with me occasionally to see a movie and frequently had to become the object of criticism of those around, for he would read the lips of the actors and shout out to me that they were saying something entirely different from the text thrown on the screen. His ability to read their lips at times precipitated a translation that was greatly in need of expurgation. This I did not mind so much as his domination of my property rights as landlord of my studio. He lodged every indigent artist or writer that came for help, so that more than once I had to step over strange bodies on the floor in order to reach my bed. Then, what was worse, I sometimes found, on arriving at my couch of promised rest, that there was no blanket there. His excuse was always the same—I would not have a man sleep on the floor with no covering, would I?

Being the only other Hungarian in our group and one who I saw could not possibly make a career for himself in the art work through which he was struggling to earn a living, he appealed to me as one who greatly needed the help which my lordly idea of a secretary could bring him. Yet he surprised me in becoming a prop on which I leaned and through his loyalty to my interests won a very deep place in my heart. Through it all he was also sending every sou he could scrape together back to his father in Hun-

gary, so that I was naturally very anxious to hear how he had fared during my absence.

Then there was "the Bohemian," of whom I craved news. His escapades had been the unfailing source of inspiration to the group. He had nothing of his own and hardly a place to lay his head, yet his humor never failed him. On one occasion the concière of the apartment where the friend lodged on whom he happened to be billeted for the moment was in a state of turmoil over the *ascenseur*, that article of equipment in the Paris apartment of our genre which functioned fitfully and temperamentally on certain indeterminate occasions. This time it was *disparu*.

"*Oui, c'est disparu, c'est vraiment disparu,*" was all the sputtering little keeper of the gate could utter. So we all went *pour faire la chasse* and finally, after every floor had been searched to no avail, discovered the misplaced article at the very top of the shaft, whither the Bohemian had managed to "conduct" it. He was found inside, peacefully shaving himself, "because it had such a very good mirror."

As an artist the Bohemian had always the great handicap of possessing only an equipment of brushes and palette but never any supply of paints. These he had generally to borrow by squeezing a fellow-painter's tube or taking a thumbful from a neighbor's palette. Once he received an order to copy the full-length portrait of an ancestor in a bourgeois home. Flushed with enthusiasm and with the dreams of the wealth this great canvas would bring, he made his rounds of the studios and equipped himself with



all the color reserves he could muster. When he came down to the shoes which the good ancestor wore, his supplies were not equal to the demands of the original canvas, so that he had to paint them in a lighter shade.

When the copy was submitted for acceptance, it was refused on account of the artist's failure to reproduce the shoes in their original tint. So the Bohemian hurried back to his wonted helpers. Alas, it was a holiday and all the studios of his friends were closed. Puzzled for the moment, he hit upon an idea and raced back to execute it. He just painted the original shoes over with the particular shade he had in stock and proudly exhibited his reconciled copy to the family, who immediately accepted it and remarked on the faithfulness with which the color of the shoes had now been reproduced.

These were but two in our little coterie that had grown with the years. Before I left the Butte Montmartre we counted English, Turkish, Belgian, German, Polish, Spanish, American, Mexican, Hungarian, French, Japanese and even one New Zealand member.

Into the studio where we were gathered on the day after Christmas suddenly walked a French sculptor, who had been away for a part of his military service. He wore the uniform of a zouave regiment. His appearance was the signal for immediate action.

"Cover! Cover!" we all shouted, as we disappeared behind easels and chairs, leaving him undisputed possession of the field. The uniform had no more place in that life than bank accounts and regu-

lar meals. It came as a shock. Soon we compromised with our old companion by draping him with a sculptor's blouse, which became him so much more fittingly.

"*Qu'est-ce qui te trotte dans la cervell, Monsieur le Maréchal de Pirates?*" came from one of the enemy under his flag of truce. For us the zouaves were always "the pirates," because of their many-colored uniform.

"Not so fast, my little cabbage; you may all find yourselves in uniform before very long." The idea seemed preposterous. There we were, representatives of many different nations with as many sets of national ideals and aspirations, but each one of us bound to every other member of the group by the common interest in our art. From the jolly Bohemian atmosphere of an artists' studio to the unknown chances of war was a long stretch of the imagination, even for those of us who had gone through our stereotyped military training. We knew that war had set its pockmarks on the face of every age, but those were ages prior to that of the international enlightenment and civilization in which we were living.

The talk had turned serious. We could not accept the idea of an international upheaval; yet we confessed our inner fears by coming round to a general pledge that, no matter what might happen at any time in the future, we as a group should never be otherwise in feelings toward one another than we had been all through the years on Montmartre and were on the day following the anniversary of Him

who came to teach the world peace and the brotherhood of man.

Furthermore, we agreed that, if ever war should come to carry us back to the armies of our several countries, we would all gather again on the "Hill of the Martyrs" and recount to one another the stories of our experiences. But in our heart of hearts we knew that the world would never go mad again.

War did come, however, and left of that group only three—the cripple, one other and myself. And now, in fulfilment of my promise to the living, whom I have never since seen, and to the spirits of those who have gone, I would tell my story of the years that have intervened.

\* \* \* \*

It was a quiet, clear morning, as I climbed the hill in front of our temporary trench system. The first rays of the rising sun fell upon one of those primitive painted crucifixes so familiar in the Polish countryside. At its foot one of our Hungarian soldiers grasped with his right hand the low fence that surrounded it. He had fallen on one knee and was staring up with glaring, sunken eyes. But a few feet beyond, a handsome young Russian boy lay on his back with his hands clutched together and reaching toward the cross. Both were dead!

After this I saw thousands of dead and dying; yet this single picture of our first morning in the firing line imprinted itself upon my mind never to be erased, as it stood out an everlasting symbol of our hypocrisy in going out to kill one another and calling upon the same God for help.

The battle had not yet begun. Only the peace and pathos of the night lay in the field. My company was detailed as an infantry guard to a battery. The tense pitch to which the forced march of the last eight days and the feverish preparations of the night had keyed us seemed suddenly to be relieved and succeeded by a calm that is often characteristic of the moments before the greatest danger. I looked down the slope to where some brilliant wild flowers were growing and had a strong desire to go gather them.

In this short hiatus of calm between the unremitting strain of the march and the impending battle, that was to be our baptismal fire, I found myself passing before my mind's eye the pictures of the last days and weeks, many of them trivial but all clear-cut and sharply lined.

There were the last meetings in Paris, with all our own group and the many others that came to make the studios memorable with gaiety and laughter. Then the summer trip to Germany and the days in my favorite city of Nuremberg, where the streets and houses looked as though they had been designed by some master toy-maker of the middle ages and where—my mobilization card reached me!

Without a moment's delay I became an element in that human stream that began flooding the Central European Empires, flowing, countering and eddying in all directions, with a turbulence that told of the storm that has burst upon the lands. Into the little town in North Hungary where I was to report in a regiment of Slovaks I flowed with the hundreds of others that came to change the acacia-lined

avenues and spotlessly clean streets into a great military barrack. All seemed confusion in the peak of movement which brought horses, cattle and every manner of supplies as gifts or offerings to the army.

Around the recruiting station a line of guards had been thrown. A movement on one side of the square focused our eyes on a struggling group of soldiers and gypsies. The father was insisting that he be taken as a soldier to fight for his country, while his strikingly beautiful wild creature of a wife and the ragged brood at her skirts were pulling him back from the line of the guards.

One of the pictures was etched with peculiar vividness. It was that of a heavily wooded valley in the Carpathians, set down between two steep, flanking ranges. On one slope was the ammunition magazine where I was stationed, tucked away there in the quiet of the mountains to be well out of the reach and the range of the enemy. Opposite us a medieval castle, the summer residence of a Hungarian Count of one of our oldest noble families, was set in the surrounding forest with the artistry of a master hand. One day a lackey came to me with a message from the family, asking whether there was anything they could offer us to add to our comfort. As we wanted very much some diversion in our quiet, I made bold to ask for a gramophone. The next evening there came a great silver tray, filled with all the dainties which the larder of so wealthy an establishment could provide. Later, realizing that I could not leave my post at any time, the young daughter and other members of the family—know-

ing my own people—came to visit me and bring me dainties of every sort. It has later seemed that Fate was bequeathing to me this memory of the lovely Carpathian valley and its hospitable lord in compensation for some of the later subsequent experiences she was to visit upon me.

But I could not brook long the appointment to the quiet mountains which friends in the headquarters staff had assigned me. These same officers had shown me also that we were but twelve cavalry divisions immediately available against forty-two of the Russians and that our reserve divisions counted only eight against their twenty-eight. So I had asked for transfer to the front—and now I was there, gazing upon the spectacle of the two bodies at the foot of the crucifix, asking aid from the same Saviour.

A sudden rattle of machine guns, the sharp detonation of shells and the roar of heavy guns flung me from my meditation into the stern realities of the moment. The smell of powder and the growing crescendo of the hellish hammering of arms of every caliber made us feel like rats in a burning house. The first thought was to duck and get down as low as possible. Then there came an irresistible urge to run, to move in some way; and, strangely enough, the pressure was not toward the rear but toward the enemy—into open ground, no matter where it lay. As recruits we had not yet come to know how to measure the timing and explosion of the different shells, so that for us it was one unending, wild confusion of nerve-wracking sound. What is even more strange, when one thinks of it after the hardening

experiences that came later, is the fact that, once this first action was over, many of the men of my company felt that now they had gone through all the dangers war had to offer and had little to fear thereafter. Several even picked up heavy sections of exploded shells and put them in their knapsacks to take home as souvenirs of the war.



Some few, under the irresistible urge to action, jumped up out of the trench and threw themselves down flat on the ground in front of it, leaving us to believe them dead, until we went over the top for our first charge. Then they rose and joined us, as we ran.

One phenomenon of that first bombardment was very noteworthy. When I heard the whistle of a shell die away, I always held my breath until the

explosion came. As the barking of the guns became more frequent, this constant holding of breath under a strong unconscious pressure set up a disturbance of circulation and caused distinct dizziness. Almost all of the recruits were affected in the same way, until they learned to check this involuntary evidence of fear. Later, when we had also learned to measure the probable range of the various sizes of shells by their whistles and to calculate from the fall of the sighting shots where the next ones would come down, we had no trouble in turning over to sleep, once we had the enemy's range work plotted in our minds.

When the pounding of the guns ceased after the continuous bombardment of three or more hours, it came as a real relief to us to hear the command "Up and forward!" We charged. The first line of the Russian trenches lay some four hundred yards away. Their machine-gun fire, which had been so heavy from the edge of the forest toward which we were headed, had ceased. Also, to our surprise, their rifles were silent. We went on, not knowing what trap had been set for us, more frightened by their silence than we would have been by their fire.

At last we reached the ground just in front of their trench and were prepared to rush them, when we discovered them sitting on the edge of the trench, staring at us as though wondering what to do. We seemed suddenly to be seized with a puzzling embarrassment. We could not jump at them and run them through with our bayonets. They looked from one to another as though asking for guidance. There



was an officer toward whom they all finally turned, just as we did to ours. Our captain hurried up to our part of the line and gave the sign to round up "the prisoners." That was the first time I had heard the word that was later to mean so much to me.

The strain was over on both sides. The Russians just smiled and we smiled back at them, glad to be so easily out of what we had feared as our first hand-to-hand engagement with the enemy. Beside each machine-gun we found great stacks of empty cartridges, showing the way they had fired off all their ammunition in the artillery duel. The prisoners were sent to the rear with only two or three of our soldiers to show them the way rather than to act as a guard to them.

As we penetrated further, I was struck by the fine equipment of a first-line hospital. It was a big, green tent, with a full staff of stalwart, fine-looking surgeons and orderlies and most ample equipment of every description. It had accommodations for hundreds of stretchers. We were, at this early stage of the war on the Galician front, carrying out an entirely different form of fighting from that which developed with the fixed trenches of the west. All forces were mobile and equipped for quick action; but this time we had made so rapid a march forward and their information service had so failed to keep their headquarters in touch with our swiftly shifting positions that we were able to take them quite off their guard and capture hospitals and equipment in considerable quantity.

It was still only August of 1914 and the Russians

were in Austrian territory. The day was hot as we went forward. It was our first meeting with death face to face, before either side had been hardened to the intimacy of the later years. As we went over the first line of trenches, a sight struck our eyes which probably never left our memories during all that came after. There, just behind the trench, the Russians had buried their dead in the dirt which had been thrown out. In their haste and carelessness they had only partially covered the bodies, so that the feet showed at the lower end of the sloping mound. It was this long line of protruding boots to the right and to the left of us, as we passed the trenches, that made us realize the depressingly certain end of most soldiers.

As we worked our way forward, we came upon the hastily constructed trenches where the bodies of Customs guards, village gendarmes and frontier police told us of the frantic attempt that had been made to stem the first push of the Russian Army into Austrian territory. We became the leading company of the most advanced element of our left wing and established such close touch with the retreating Russian forces that we chased the mounted Cossacks who were destroying the telegraph lines as they went. By evening we had reached the frontier near the little Russian town of Tomasoff, which was being bombarded not only by our artillery but by the Russians as well, under the belief that our forces had already reached it.

But we were still just at the frontier. For us a dramatic moment of the war had come. The army of

Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaievitch had been thrust back from our soil. Now we were to cross the border into enemy territory. But our captain was transferred to command of the battalion in a general shifting of officers to replace losses, and I was made commandant of the platoon from which I was to take the first patrol into Russian territory.

To mark this distinct event in the crossing of the border a "Honved" band was brought forward and stationed just at the frontier line to play stirring marches, as the first of the troops should pass over. Their music was, however, more visual than oral, owing to the crash of the artillery around them. Suddenly there came an unusually heavy explosion. A great shell had burst close by. Looking round, I saw a bass trumpet in the air and several musicians stretched on the ground. When the air cleared, we found our band intact and only temporarily interrupted by the concussion. They played us into enemy territory, as my patrol started toward Tomasoff.

The shelling had ceased and left in its trail a whole section of the town in flames. We entered one of the main streets, where some dozens of houses along one side of the way were all burning or smoldering after the fury of the fire had waned. What a heartrending sight it was for us young recruits! The impoverished, frightened inhabitants crouched against the walls and in the corners of the still-standing buildings, gazing with anguished faces at their rapidly crumbling homes and shaking with fear at the sound of each bursting shell.

Here and there I saw charred or burning bodies of those who had been killed or wounded by the bombardment and caught in the flames. But it was reserved for me to come upon one sight that ineradicably deepened my feeling of revulsion for war. As I turned a corner, I beheld the body of a woman, leaning back against a wall in quite a natural position. She held a baby in her arms. Both were but charred remains of the former life that had been in them, yet their positions were so lifelike that I shrunk from the sight. Even as I looked, the wall behind tumbled and ured them in their sepulcher of dust and ashes, but not soon enough to blot the picture from my mind.

My soul revolted. Against an enemy with rifle and bayonet in hand we could go, but must we be responsible for this suffering of the innocents? And, too, what would this callousness of the Russian toward his own people spell, if he should gain control over our nationals—or, even, over me myself? For the selfish fear that is within every man would not down, even before a sight like this.

But it was no time for reflection. We infantrymen were being pushed aside by the advancing artillery and cavalry, until we were almost in the very edge of the fumes from the burning buildings. Some of our uniforms even caught fire. Then came a sudden change. We turned down a side street that led us up out of the town to a hill beyond which lay the pitch dark of a forest night. Our eyes, filled with the glare of the fire, could not penetrate the black wall that seemed to stop us with its augury of impend-

ing danger. Though we could not see or hear them, we knew that the Russians filled the wood on the slope below us—for we smelled them. Incredible as it may seem, the penetrating odor of their coats, woven from cow-hair, and of the chemical disinfectant with which they were treated in the military stores, was so all-pervading that the territory they occupied smelled as strong as though we were in a closed room. The wind blew the stench into our nostrils the whole night.

We were ordered to continue the advance. Before us and even in our rear, signal fires were burning to show our position. We knew they must be the work of the enemy, as we were forbidden to burn a stack of hay or make any light at all. Then there were constant whistlings, like the calls of birds, which continued until we were right upon them or silenced them with our fire. In the morning we found several Russian dead with the whistles in their hands to confirm this.

One is terribly helpless in the absolute darkness, especially when advancing into enemy territory over unknown rough terrain. The branches of the trees cut my face until my neck and coat were covered with blood. Then we fell into the many holes and bruised ourselves on the jagged stones. Yet we kept groping our way forward, giving commands in whispers and keeping in touch as best we could. Suddenly a huge star-shell broke over our heads and the guns were upon those of us in the clearings before we could reach cover. Many of our company fell, some wounded, others only thrown down by the con-

cussion of exploding shells. We all rushed forward for the cover of the thicker trees. The earth gave way and I felt myself falling. As I landed dazed and bruised, I found I had bitten through my tongue and had fallen over an abrupt cliff of some thirty feet in height. Unwarned by any information regarding our terrain, many of my men had been caught in the same way and not a few of them had been pierced through the throat or chin by their own bayonets. They had been carrying their rifles in one hand, while the other was being used to protect the face against bushes and branches.

We had fallen into a morass, where we were again suddenly exposed by the enemy's use of fire-shells that set the pine trees burning on the cliff above us. We dressed our wounded as best we could and reformed for the further advance. This took us deeper into the swamp, where the water came to our breasts and shoulders. On account of my size I took one man on my back and helped hold one up with each hand. The footing was so treacherous that we did not know when we should step into a hole that would take us all under. Finally, we reached a protected bit of higher ground and stopped to rest. The cold wind made my teeth chatter so violently that I held my chin with my hand in the attempt to stop the unnerving movement, but to no avail. So I took the platoon forward again to keep the men in motion. We were establishing touch with our flanking elements and were walking up the day.

With the arrival of the warming sun came another welcome change for our platoon. The farthest in advance, we were ordered to patrol a village just ahead

of our lines. This was a very popular duty, as we had lived during our fortnight of rapid movement on the raw carrots and onions which our foragers could gather from the fields. We had carried one single reserve ration that was consumed at the very outset. My men rounded up everything they could lay their hands on. Their booty included a large jar of pickles, another of beets, some stone-like, infected-looking cheese and even a quantity of dry mustard.

But the Goddess of Mercy of the day was a charitable cow that stood awaiting us in a field, ready to give us a free supply of her milk, enough for all seven of us and for some of our waiting companions back in the line. Less gracious were our next animal purveyors, the bees of a hive which one of the Slovak boys discovered. Though we presented ourselves with a huge comb of honey, we carried away the mark of our contact with them. Mine happened to be, of all places, on my tongue, which swelled so enormously that it filled and even overflowed my mouth. When I arrived back in the line and tried to answer the field telephone, which had already been carried forward, I heard my superior officer say "He's gone crazy" without being able to dispute the matter or correct him.

Then Fate dealt me another blow. A horse, brought up from the rear during our morning pause, saluted me with a terrific kick on the knee. The pain, combined with the mixture of food which I had taken into my unaccustomed stomach, started to nauseate me and turn me green. I visited the dressing station that had been established just behind

our lines. The doctor was a gruff brute, who told me that I was "in delicate health" but that the "best thing to do is to march it off." He gave me what he assured me would be good for all my ills—a great spoonful of baking soda. This was the only remedy he had in stock at the time and the one which he consequently prescribed for all cases.

Following the doctor's advice, I took part that day in a twenty-five mile march on the heels of the retreating Russians. Once we came into touch with their rearguard and had a short engagement. It was during this fight that the Russians used one of their tricks developed during the Russo-Japanese War and with which we had already become familiar in the first days of the campaign. A weak-looking line of them showed a flag of truce and stood up as though they would surrender. My captain had warned me against their abuse of the white flag, so that I was prepared and went forth cautiously. Sure enough, when we were within point blank range, a machine-gun hidden in the branches of a tree opened on us. We flattened ourselves immediately. A young non-com in my company, who was a wonderful marksman, lay close to me and asked if he might try to get the man. In a second the body of the gunner dropped and caught in the lower branches of the tree.

Another form of their trick was to conceal perfectly a strong first line and then show the white flag on a weak second one, until we were right in front of the first trench and quite at their mercy.

On this occasion, our company soon cleared the



trees and captured the men who had abused the recognized practice of war; but we were hurried on in the pursuit, while our prisoners were left to the headquarters officers to be dealt with. Only two or three miles further on the evening was upon us, and we were ordered to dig ourselves in. In the quiet of the night we had time to realize how hungry, and especially how thirsty, we were. Though we were warned to expect a general engagement in the early morning against the massing enemy, we had little thought for anything save the rest of a few hours and the chance of something to drink.

There was a village just ahead of us that was still in possession of the Russians. Just near it we had discovered a small stream in the last of the fading light. Tortured by thirst, I ordered Sidor, a half-witted Slovak, to collect our bottles and go in absolute silence to try to fill them for us without being discovered by the enemy. Contrary to my strong admonition, he took little heed and rattled the aluminium bottles in a way that spelled for us no water and probably no water bottles or Sidor. About the time he should have been returning our fears were not helped by the noise of the hoof-beats of a passing Cossack patrol. In the midst of it we heard a cry:

"Over here, comrade; this way. Give me a hand, somebody. It's heavy."

I thought some one had been hurt and ran out to see. It was Sidor.

"Keep quiet, you crazy loon!" I whispered. "What has happened?"

"Here take it quick, I can't hold it any longer."

"What in the devil ails you? What have you got?" I asked, thinking he was in great difficulty over something.

"Soup!" he shouted with pride, as though it were the magic word to gain us the victory. "Take the stuff. It is burning my hands."

He was staggering toward me with a heavy iron kettle full of delicious-smelling soup, which I helped him to carry back to our comrades in the trench. There we had his story. While the others dipped regularly and steadily into the excellent Russian brew, the half-witted Sidor, in the true wont of the Slovak for self-praise, punctuated his eating with:

"Sidor has brains. He saw the Russian cook preparing soup for his men and waited for him to go away for a moment. Then he ran and grabbed it. . . . The Russians are good. They give their men soup. . . . They are better than that—they give it to their enemies."

The next morning, when the shrapnel was our alarm clock, some of the men teased Sidor by warning him that the Russians were taking vengeance on us for the theft of the soup and that they were shooting directly at him. The poor fellow took it in earnest and was in an agony of fear.

The command came to prepare for a bayonet attack. Every one received the order with a desperate attempt to keep calm, but one could plainly see the strain under which we labored. The mistake had been made of giving the command too long before the advance was sounded, so that the nerves of the

men were getting frazzled. Some began chattering in a most foolish manner; others found silly diversion in the antics of an earthworm; while another group indulged in bayonet practice to make light of the impending slaughter.

"Forward and use the bayonet furiously!" finally sounded as the last words in the field telephone before I dropped the receiver and called to the men to go.

Near me was a tall Slovak boy, whose beautiful young wife I had seen as we left our mobilization barracks and to whom I felt an obligation for the safety and return of her young husband. His eyes were full of tears, as he heard the command.

"My God," he moaned, "this will be the end of it all!"

"Don't worry," I remember saying to him in my own far from calm state of mind, "if you get a hole in your skin, you can sew it up."

Over the top we went and, as we swept across the field, I noticed other companies emerging from the trenches and establishing touch on either side of us. Then, to our relief and secret joy, we found we were not the first line, as we had supposed, but that there were two others ahead of us, who were timed to go over just as we swept past them and formed with them a thickening line. The Russians sprang from their trench and presented a double line of bayonets to meet our onslaught. The imprint of that scene will never leave me. There was a peculiar leer in the faces of these men behind the double row of steel. When he is in the ascendant, the Russian is a ter-

rible fighter and can go wild with the lust of killing; but once the odds are against him, he often shows a cowardice and a terror in his face that give his enemy a tremendous advantage over him.

Even their positions are still as vividly fixed in my mind as they were on that morning of battle. They crouched, with their heads low and drawn close in between the shoulders. As we came on, they gave forth a most peculiar jargon of noises. It was not a hurrah, but more of a murmur that grew into a rumble and roar of formless sounds that came as individual expressions for their fear or fury.

Then they jeered at us in challenge. We rushed pell-mell upon them. A moment of pause came as our bayonets touched theirs. It is a peculiar and incredible phenomenon that, just as a line of bayonets come together this way, there is always this pause for the fraction of a moment, while the two sides look each other in the eyes and seem to await the opening of the struggle, just as two fencers do after the original touch of the rapiers. The instant that either one moves, that some one at the side starts or that one or the other shouts, then the ghastly struggle is on and observations cease.

In this, my first contact with them under these conditions, they suddenly let out a yell like a single man. The lunging started and the battle narrowed down to the single individual opposed to one. The Russian bayonets were long and merciless-looking weapons, but the men behind them were far from clever. When my opponent drove at me, I struck his rifle down and had him at my mercy. Following the

instinct to protect myself against attack from the man next to him, I gave him a blow with the flat of my bayonet on the cheek that tumbled him over just in time to meet the thrust of his comrade, whom I dealt with in the same manner.

In such a fight the cowards or weaker men on the defending line jump back or give way. Those whose rifles are struck down and who can thus be dispatched by their opponents usually throw down their arms in recognition of the clemency shown them. Once a few go down like this, those on either side often follow, because they see that they will be taken on the flank and have little chance of saving their lives. In this way a whole line will often go down like so many leaning cards.

In only a brief instant after the first clash we had so definitely the better of our enemy that their ranks broke and we shouted:

"Surrender! Throw down your rifles!" They were our prisoners. Disarmed, they watched our every gesture with suspicious fear. Our men had not been instructed what to do with prisoners, and I noticed in their ranks indications of a willingness to handle them roughly. While they seemed to be waiting a signal from me, I stepped quietly to the Russian officer nearest me, gave him my hand and then offered him a cigarette. The effect was like magic. The wild fear in their faces gave way to a broad smile, as they gathered around me. I explained to them that my men had done only their duty and that they were now probably better off as prisoners than were we ourselves, who had to go on to further battles.



## CHAPTER II

### ALWAYS DEEPER AND DEEPER

THIS battle was our first victory, but not, however, the last one. The next day had many surprises in store for us. Our situation became momentarily more complicated. I was put at the head of twelve men who were to act as a scouting party for the most advanced unit of the army.

This duty suited me well, and my superior officers began to know me as one who preferred to be always with the men in the forward positions where there was the greatest independence and the least touch with those in authority. From the very first of my military training days I had been far from an orthodox soldier. As a graduate of a *Realschule* I had been entitled to the privileges of the "*Einjähriger*," that is, to take the officers' course of one year only with the chance of being made lieutenant or senior non-commissioned officer, instead of having

to serve the three years of the common soldier. During my year I had managed to squirm out of more than the half of my period of instruction, as I had no sympathy whatsoever for either the career or the ways of the militarist.

When I came into the army and faced the actual conditions of war, my respect for the officers above me was not heightened. I had frequent indication that some of them were more afraid of revolt among their own soldiers than they were of the attacks of the enemy. They revealed this in the unwarranted harshness and, at times, cruelty which they showed toward their inferior officers and men. Through contact with many of these, whom the men referred to often as "barrack hyenas," I feared that I would one day so far forget myself as to merit severe discipline and so took the precaution of keeping at the front as much as possible, where one was sure never to see them.

Unfortunately, too, many of the rank and file had little respect for the transport and commissary men or for any of the great organization that functioned in the rear. One particular member of the supply department who tried to get me to sign a false receipt for things never delivered happened to be one of the first victims of the dreaded cholera that raged in the Russian towns. In his pocket were found two hundred thousand crowns, marked as his personal funds.

One of the incidents in which my unmilitary spirit nearly wrought my downfall came when an inspection revealed that thirteen of my men had eaten the

reserve ration which each was supposed to have in his haversack. Our battalion commander ordered me to string the men up by their wrists crossed behind their backs with their toes just touching and leave them thus for half an hour. I answered him quietly:

“Major, I did not come here to persecute my own men. I am not a hangman.”

“But I want you to carry out my orders just the same,” he spat at me in rage at being disobeyed.

“Never!” was my reply in the same tone he had used.

“You will be courtmartialed and shot for this.” And he even reached for his revolver as though to frighten me into submission.

My lieutenant intervened and sent me away with the admonition that my case was pending. But that was the last report I ever had of it.

It was in this spirit that I went willingly forward with my scout detachment to report on the exact position of the retreating Russians. After a short interval we found ourselves about half a mile in front of our leading detachments and were just approaching a thick forest which was supposed to be occupied by the enemy, when suddenly my ear caught the sound of clattering hoofs. I signaled back to our battalion to halt and conceal themselves, while we ourselves dropped down into tall grass that hid us perfectly and, as we discovered, the stones of an old cemetery as well. Soon three Russian horsemen appeared from the dark forest.



They looked about for a moment and, seeing no one, turned back into the wood.

In a little while the sounds of distant commands reached us, followed shortly by the appearance of the head of a column of infantry emerging from the cover of the trees. With our machine-gun already placed, I was able to signal back "approaching infantry," before being compelled to drop lower into the grass. The thick column wound along the road just in front of us as our battalion machine-guns opened on them and mowed them down like grain. Pandemonium broke loose. Those in the front of the column who had not fallen turned and ran headlong into those who were following or over the bodies of the fallen. Many were so amazed that they stupidly stood still, blocking the way of their fleeing comrades. Finally, the confusion became complete as some of them tried to escape through the cemetery, only to come face to face with the fire of our hidden gun. Then the last of the rifles were thrown down, as they thought they were entirely surrounded. We counted nine hundred prisoners and sent them off to the rear.

A few hours later we found ourselves forging ahead toward a causeway that was built across a wide swamp beyond which lay a forest and broken terrain. The noise indicated that heavy fighting was taking place in the woods. To secure a better view of the distant field I was just about to climb the tall chimney of a cement factory that stood at the edge of the road, when a tremendous explosion robbed me of my senses for a second. I found my-

self half-buried under the débris of the chimney and thought all my bones were broken. But I managed to dig myself out and discovered I had no serious injury. The stack had been hit square in the middle by an enemy shell.

Already our column was well out on the causeway, which was ten or twelve feet above the surface of the swamp. The shells began falling thicker and thicker along it, and suddenly we realized also that the enemy had laid a barrage fire in our rear, so that we had no choice but to advance. Their gunnery was the most accurate we had yet been forced to meet and took heavy toll of our men before the order came to abandon the causeway for the swamp. Later, we learned that this road was one of the favorite practice ranges of the Russians and that they could drop shells on every square yard of it.

As men and horses went down into the swamp, we struggled in the muddy water, with the larger men helping the smaller over the deep places until we all had to swim for it with our packs of seventy pounds growing heavier every moment with the soaking of the water. Horses overloaded with men hanging on every place they could secure a grip and all of us struggling in confusion, we finally managed to reach firm ground and realized we had been caught in as thorough a trap as that of the Russians the day before.

By the time we re-established touch with our main body, the mud of the noisome swamp had dried on our uniforms and left us a queer-looking gray color all over. My scouting group was immedi-

ately ordered to patrol a distant wind-mill, where I was able to confirm a suspicion we had developed that the enemy was using these mills for information purposes. Practically every farm had one of them for grinding their flour and feed. We noticed often that they were set with the wings all pointing in one direction, though this was not to windward. This one confirmed our belief that the farmers were fixing them to point in the direction we were marching. Their sails could be seen by the Russian observers at a great distance, so that they became a perfect source of information.

The moment we reached this particular one I slipped out the blocking piece and swung the mill round to reblock it in quite a difficult direction. Then, with our orders accomplished, I thought to take advantage of the unusual respite to strip off the muddy uniform and have a change of underwear and stockings. I was not only caked with mud and still had some of the chimney débris inside my clothes, but I had not had my uniform off for a month and not even my pack unslung for more than a week. When I stripped to my shirt, I found it in ribbons and incredibly filthy, infested with those "uninvited guests" of the soldier that never surrender. Then I took off one of my shoes. At the outset, I had put on three pairs of socks, first silk ones to protect the skin from the roughness of the following heavy woolen ones and then another pair of silk ones of the strongest quality to hold the wool in place and protect it from the rubbing of my boots. I was amazed to find hardly a trace of anything

that could be identified as silk or wool. There was nothing but a black pulp that cushioned the foot in the corners of my shoe.

Sidor, the half-witted boy, was with us, having stuck close to me in the belief that I could somehow get food when I wanted it. He found a bag of rye flour in the mill and ate it ravenously and with apparent relish. But just then the firing became sharp around us. We were being sniped from some indeterminate point. No one felt much concern, however, now that the whistling of bullets was our constant life accompaniment. Then we turned and suddenly saw two of our men down, one shot through the heart. It is a peculiar characteristic of men shot through the heart that the last expression on the face is one of terrible agony and one that breaks your nerve quicker than anything else. They are often found with the long nails that have grown during the weeks of neglect sunk into the palms of the hands until the blood has flowed. In contrast, those who fall with a shot through the head often have the calmest of expressions and even something approaching a smile.

The moment my men discovered our two comrades fallen, their unnerved state after the fatigue of the last days revealed itself in this little oasis of calm. One fell on his knees and prayed; then most of the others followed. The sharp-shooter peasant, a man of most moderate and clean speech and calm under all conditions, asked me why I did not pray. Just then an artillery officer came to us and reported the front line broken and a rout in

progress before a general advance of the enemy. As he advised us to retreat, Sidor paled with fear.

"Never mind, Sidor," I said to him, "if the Russians come, you will have more soup." It was one of the moments of greatest emotional strain, under which I was trying to keep up the morale of my men.

Before the loss of our two comrades had destroyed our short breathing spell, one of the men had produced a razor, and we all started to work on the shaggy beards that covered our faces. To save time, we passed the razor around and let each man shave one-half his face while the next was wetting and rubbing one of his facial hemispheres. By the time it had gone around once and the first man had just finished shaving the second cheek, the firing that upset us began and was shortly followed by the signal to rejoin the battalion. And so we went, marked as jail-birds and myself with but one foot rehabilitated. It carried a note of humor into a sad scene. As we reformed the battalion, there were only one hundred out of the thousand to report. Tears stole from the battalion commander's eyes, as he urged us not to flinch and promised to protect us as far as lay within his power from further exposure of the type we had faced during the past days.

As evening approached, he had an immediate opportunity to give effect to his promise and did so at the risk of his own career. Orders came to go into the forest beyond and slightly below us, where a hellish fire was raging. When we came closer, night

fell and he refused to take us into the inferno, saying that he had no information of the positions and would not go blindly into such a *mélée*. We bivouacked behind a slight undulation in the terrain and lay down to await the light.

The morning proved his wisdom. Rifle and machine-gun fire continued throughout the whole of the night, fading in the morning hours to an almost ominous silence. When our battalion commander finally consented to advance, the sight that met us in that wood was one that not only shot our nerves to pieces but puzzled us in a most mysterious manner. As we entered we found shallow trenches running in all directions, with apparently no system whatever in their plan, and many of them filled to the top with the bodies of both our own and enemy dead. Many of these were already puffed and distended in a way that showed they had fallen a day or two before, while others were almost warm. We found medical officers and even a chaplain in the ghastly piles.

A little deeper in the inexplicable wood we found one of the division battery field guns with its horses shot and three artillery-men still on the seat of the gun-carriage, one dropped over to the side and the other two leaning against him, as though some great supernatural power had stepped in and blighted all the life in the place.

One of our group suddenly came upon the body of the Austrian division commander with his chief of staff lying but a few feet away. The general was shot through the temple and held his revolver in

his hand with only one chamber empty. Had panic or fear taken possession of a whole army? We unbuttoned the uniform and found that the commandant was General H——.

Close by, behind the field gun, lay a gruesome line of dead, who looked as though they had been stood up and blown over like a row of nine-pins. At the end nearest the gun-carriage lay a Russian general and several officers of high rank. Sitting on the ground and leaning against a wheel of the carriage was an artilleryman who—the man was alive! A dazed spirit in this gruesome company of the dead. Later we also dragged out a shell-shocked man still able to tell something of a coherent tale. Little by little and even weeks afterward from a wounded captain in hospital I pieced together the story of that night of madness.

It seems that the previous night and early morning there had been a Russian force in possession of the wood, when our advance division attacked and drove them back after fierce fighting that left the trenches strewn with dead from both sides. In the midst of the forest lay a swamp, in which the Russians were wont to cut ice in winter and store it in a half-buried ice-house on an island in the middle of the low ground. Some of the fleeing Russians had taken refuge in this ice-house during the daytime engagement and, when night fell, began shooting to all points of the compass to see from which quarter would come no answering shots, thinking thus to find the segment of the circle through which they might escape. By this time our forces had come

into possession of practically all the wood and, being badly informed and deceived by the circular position which they had gradually taken up during the gruelling fight of the day, mistook the shots for another enemy attack and fired toward the center of the swamp.

Hearing this, a battalion or part of a battalion of our famous Bosnian regiment went into the forest during the early part of the night and joined the firing, just as a Russian unit also did from the further side. These added confirmation to the general belief that a full-sized battle was being staged and kept all the forces firing with merciless machine guns and rifle streams across the center of the arena. In the exhaustion of the morning, before the sight that met his eyes General H—— had committed suicide.

The explanation of the Russian general's death was more incredible. With the first of the light the Russians had sent in more troops and rounded up what few of our men still remained alive, either having been shell-shocked or having dropped flat on the ground while the murderous machine-guns were raking the wood. Feeling themselves in quiet possession of the bloody field, after some of their cavalry scouts had brought back word of the conditions, the general went into the wood with some of his staff to make a personal investigation. He finally came to the field-piece and found the single artilleryman alive beside it. It was the first opportunity that had come to the Russians for examining our new field-gun, and he was looking it over in



every detail. The dazed artilleryman could not tell just how it had all come about. He remembered being asked many questions by the general and his staff, but could not speak Russian and understood nothing. The commander leaned down to look into the muzzle of the gun to examine the rifling, while the members of his staff crowded behind him. Whether the artilleryman himself pulled the string or whether one of the staff released the firing-pin by accident we could not determine, but the explosion came and accounted for the presence of the Russian general and his staff among our dead.

We were at work in this ghastly hole for over an hour, which gave me not only the opportunity to make a careful drawing of the battle, but also to understand why it is that there are so many graves of our unknown dead throughout the whole war area. Peasants from a near-by village were brought up to help our men bury the dead. Disgusted and sickened by the sight of the maggots of death, we shrank from touching the bloated corpses. The peasants, with their heavy wooden hay-forks, just rolled the bodies into the trenches while we covered them with earth, Russians and our own men alike, without examining identification discs or papers at all.

In the midst of the crushing spectacle Sidor and another of my scouting group gave us an example of the unquenchable primitive appetite in man. They discovered some sugar, covered with filthy flies, sticking out of the knapsack of one of our fallen soldiers and immediately began to devour it

like wolves. I had to give them both a round hiding for their act.

How callous we had grown with fatigue and the constant strain came out later in the morning. Rain had begun to fall, and this was followed by a most peculiar ground fog, that opened here and there to show a bit of terrain ahead and then closed down on us again until we could hardly see or keep in touch with our supporting units. We were advancing close behind the retreating enemy. In the confusion we marched square into the extended line of an apache regiment from Budapest that was acting in the wildest manner. Figures sprang up in the fog and rifles were leveled.

"Don't shoot. He's one of our men!" A laugh and the guns went down again. Then the figure of a fleeing Russian was momentarily revealed by the lifting fog. Down he went with half a dozen bullets in him. Another laugh, and some one called out:

"Oh, never mind! There are lots more recruits in Russia."

The later developments of that day did not help our spirits. In the drizzling rain we came upon a mass grave in the neighborhood of a Russian village, where the toll of another enemy, cholera, lay exhibited. Shortly afterward our line was extended along a highway to defend it against possible attack. Here information of the contents of the order of the day came to us. In part it read:

"Occasional casualties; but the spirit of our troops is excellent."

Never had I been so low in spirit, never so de-

moralized. It was night again. I was fagged out, dead for want of sleep and benumbed with cold. A storm was raging. Crack went the sentry's rifle and jerked me out of a stiffening, delirious sleep. Out of the black depths of the night came the sound of Russian laughter and of tramping feet.

"Another trap," whispered the man next to me. We were deadly still. Out of the darkness they came, marching with never a note of fear or cau-



tion. Straight on they swung, never halting or hesitating when our sentry gave the second challenge.

"*V plyenu! V plyenu!*" they shouted, but we did not know then what "*V plyenu!*" meant.

"Fire!" roared the commandant, and down they went amid the cursing and groaning of the wounded and dying. But no answering shots came to threaten us.

"*Plyen-nu! Plyen-n-nu!*" They were unarmed, though we could not see it in the inky night. We had shot them down, when they were coming to give themselves up as prisoners. They were a battal-

ion that had revolted against their officers, killed them and started to march for the nearest point of our line. In their careless naïveté they had walked square into our fire, without taking the precaution to send a single man ahead with a plea for security. The most we could do was to give the fallen a decent burial and send the wounded back to our dressing-station. Who will ever know the sadness of the living, as they stood with bowed heads beside the open grave of those companions who, but a few moments before, were marching with them and laughing over the joy of being at last out of the hell of fire and battle? Or who will tell our feelings at burying so many dead, because we did not understand their tongue?

The day had been enough to rob any man of his reason without this oppressing tragedy at the end of it. Under the strain the men manifested their innermost thoughts in various ways. I heard one of the usually mild and quiet Slovaks answer a companion:

“Go away with your God! Even if there was one, he would have to resign after all this.” A third followed after a brief pause with the pathetic comment:

“Anyway, there will soon be no one left but old women to pray to Him.”

But the end of our trials was not yet. Fatigued as I was, I rose after but a few short hours of sleep, gave a necessary command or two to my men and started for the crest of a hill to the east. How long I walked I do not know, but the dawn was

reddening the tips of the forest as I turned back, with my mind more at peace. I had been compelled to fight with my own inner nature and conquer my spirit of revolt before I could go a step further. On returning, I needed all that my hours of silence had given me to meet an unexpected guest. I had just said to one of my men:

"Joe, won't you take that bucket and get us some water from the spring I passed down there?"

"Who the hell are you giving orders like a —— priest?" I turned round and found myself face to face with none other than the angry, glowering General B——. "This place is an army! Beat the swine; don't kiss the lazy loafers."

I saluted respectfully but said nothing. He acknowledged it with a curse, turned and strutted away, swearing at some of the men and cutting his way through others with his riding crop. He was never known to smile, yet he had the reputation of being a marvelous fighting general and served through the whole of the war without a break.

Our morning hours needed more cheer than that. It was the trying hour when the early forced marches were always begun. These were so long and so unbroken that we were never even given time to remove or put on our coats, so that we had to choose whether we would start out with them on our packs and run the risk of the morning and evening cold and possible rain or put them on and face the certain killing heat, if the sun shone clear.

Only a day or two later we had no more than started, when some cavalry scouts came riding at a

gallop and reported something to the colonel which made him send for me.

"Something terrible has happened in the valley beyond those woods. It won't do for the men to see that field. Go there with your scouts and bring back to me an exact report just as fast as you can travel."

He directed me to go into the wood and take the first road on the left. This soon dwindled to a trail and then to a mere cowpath, but eventually brought me out on the edge of a level stretch of land, on the further side of which lay a small village. But when our eyes dropped to the plain, we saw it covered with the bodies of thousands of dead cavalrymen. No one can ever describe it! At the end of one of the village streets were packed in fifty or sixty men and horses, still in absolutely regular formation and so closely jammed in the narrow way that they were still half-standing. They all evidently had gone down with the single sweep of a machine-gun. Hardened as we were to the gruesomeness of war by this time, this sight nearly finished us.

Out on the field also they lay not as on an ordinary battlefield, where men fall here and there or in small groups, but in regular rows and so close that we could hardly pass between them. Many of the horses showed by their peculiar upright posture that they had been shot through the head, as all the four legs of an animal so hit collapse at the same moment and let the beast straight down to the

ground, just as animals are often carved in stone in the *couchant* position.

It made me sick, so sick and dizzy that I nearly collapsed. It was some moments before I could begin a detailed investigation. This again was war—and such war! Then we came upon some stretcher-bearers at work. They seemed lethargic and under the heavy spell of the terrible disaster. I went over to one of the field ambulance orderlies. He had five of the survivors propped up against the body of a fallen horse. I passed my flask to them without a word. One of the hussars took a pull at it and then spoke out, punctuating his every phrase with the most profane oaths:

“What a swine, that lousy beast! —, you don’t know what you missed!”

“How did it happen?” I asked. “Where are the Russian dead?”

“—— ———!” he retorted, “There are none.” I plied him with questions, and he was not one to hold anything back from me.

“We were assembled here yesterday morning, awaiting the arrival of General F——. Damn his dirty soul to hell! He was a Swab, who knows as much about cavalry as I do about Jesus Christ. The —— ——— fool gave orders to attack the new Russian concrete fortification at dawn. Crazy ass! See those boys over there?” he asked, pointing to the edge of the forest, lined with heaps of dead men and horses. “The dirty blackguard sent them to their death without giving a damn what happened to

them. The Russians cut them down with their machine-guns like wheat.

“‘Second battle formation!’ roared the madman, and eight thousand more got killed in five minutes. That was more than we could stand. As he gave the order for a third attack, his own orderly yanked out his gun and, yelling:

“‘Take it, you bastard!’ filled him with lead. He’s due for a court-martial, that lad; but he’ll never get it till Heaven falls. No one knows anything about it—neither do you.”

I sat there frozen with horror, while he told his story. A young lieutenant struggled in, supported by a hussar. His left lung was literally hanging out on his back, and one could count the ribs which were cut through by some sharp instrument. He still wore his monocle, spattered with blood. I rose, stunned by the awfulness of it all, mumbled a hasty “Good-bye!” and started away from the ghastly scene.

General F—— came from an abnormal family, which was evidenced in a shocking way by the act of his son in burning his home with his wife in it. It seems incredible that men of his type should attain to the rank of general with unlimited power over the lives of thousands of his fellows. There were other things from which we suffered at the front that stirred our blood against the stupidity of the negligence of the high command or the administration of the war. On that field, for instance, where so many thousands fell, the sanitary corps was hopelessly inadequate. Stretcher-bearers were always far below the needs,



and our sanitary forces were counted in tens where the Russians had whole columns of finely equipped units.

What was more of a crime and a crass error in the handling of our people was the government's treatment of a Protestant sect known as the Nazarenes. These men held to a rigid code of honesty, compassion and sympathy for their fellow-men. When they were mobilized and brought to the barracks, they refused to receive their rifles or touch them in any way. If the guns were placed on their shoulders, they would even shake them off and not allow their hands to be defiled by them. For this stubbornness they were taken out by the score and shot as traitors to their country. Later, when the authorities awoke to the heinousness of such treatment, they sent these men into the sanitary corps, where they did marvelous service and contrasted strongly with the ordinary personnel of this branch of the army, most of whom were, unfortunately, drawn from a class of undesirables who not only lacked the higher feelings and principles of the Nazarenes, but who stole unblushingly the property of the dead and failed utterly to win the respect of the men at the front.

Another practice of the high command that engendered feelings of unfairness and hatred of their smug militarism was the gradual withdrawal from the front of all the regular army officers and their replacement by the reservists, who had done their military training and gone back to follow civil oc-

cupations. After the first few months there were hardly any of the regular army men of the rank of captain or lower in the forward positions.

On leaving that bloody plain where some twenty-seven thousand of our dead cavalymen paid the forfeit of their lives to the stupidity of a single mind, I was crushed by the horror of it all and lay under the nerve-racking spell of it as I worked my way back to corps headquarters and made my report. It was late in the evening when I was ordered to rejoin my command, somewhere far to the front. As I stumbled along through the fields, with thoughts blacker than any night could be, in search of the headquarters of the nearest regiment, I came upon the commando where the colonel was just preparing to go to sleep in a farm wagon. When I asked permission to attach myself to his unit until the morning, he answered:

“Carry on to your regiment, it is only ten kilometers along the line and you will have time to get there before the general attack that is ordered for the morning.”

I was dead tired and turned away—but not to stumble through ten kilometers of unknown country. I withdrew for a few moments, until he had settled down, and then crawled back under the wagon, loosened my boot-laces, made a pillow of some of the long grass and went to sleep. To this day I still remember the dream from which I awoke in the early morning hours. I was slipping over a waterfall and the stream was running splashing into

my face. I opened my eyes to find that my wagon-house had quietly rolled away and the rain was falling in my upturned face. How long I had slept I did not know. I could not remember where I was. My first thought was to jump up and run for shelter, when I heard hoof-beats coming down the road, at the side of which I was lying.

I crouched back into the grass and lay as though dead, while three Russian officers rode by, looking nervously from side to side. They were immediately followed by a dense column of lancers. I momentarily expected one of their long, wicked pikes between my ribs. I remember now how curiosity and the foolish optimism of the hardened soldier got the better of my reason and made me raise my head to see whether the end of the interminable column was in sight. The mind plays us extraordinary tricks at times. I found myself looking squarely into the eyes of one of the lancers, who rode within easy striking distance of me. But he and all the others passed me by and went thundering on.

The moment the last of the column had finally passed, I crawled behind some small shrubbery that edged the road and flattened myself again. In a few minutes firing began. They had awakened our lines. Then they came scurrying back, pell-mell, dropping to our shots as they rode. One of them pitched from his horse and rolled so close to me that I could almost feel his breath on my cheek, as he groaned and moaned with pain. What if he should call to his fleeing comrades and they should find

me? I did not, however, wait long but was soon beside the man, helping him to tie up his wounded leg. His companions paid no attention to me, only riding for their lives. In a few minutes a patrol of our Hungarian infantry passed in hot pursuit. Two of them turned aside and helped me take the wounded cavalryman to our lines before the Russians should return.

Our feeling that they would come back proved right, for within an hour they reappeared and swung into attack formation just outside the forest and lay in advance of our lines. We could have shot them down with our machine-guns without the loss of a single man, but our cavalry commandant intervened and offered them a fighting chance. He collected all our hussars and other mounted men at headquarters and galloped out to battle as in some medieval day. We infantrymen rested on our arms as spectators of this unusual tournament-like display. The Russians had drawn up in double line before the forest with their lances leveled. There they awaited the oncoming hussars, their heads sunk between their shoulders and their weight thrown forward into their long, slender weapons. They outnumbered our four hundred troopers three to one. It looked like sheer madness, as our nervous, wild-eyed horses swung into the single line that must go against that phalanx. With a cheer that made a tingling sensation run up and down our spines, they spurred their dancing horses into action.

"Charge!" shouted our commander—and we held

our breath. Off they went, thundering down the sward to meet the enemy. There was a high mist hanging over the field that gave it an additional air of strangeness. The sun broke through and sent its slanting rays on the flashing swords. A great "Hurrah!" went up from the Russian line, only a little more than two hundred yards from our trenches, yet they did not move. They only crouched lower in their saddles. On our hussars swept, until they were almost within striking distance of the foe, then suddenly the ranks broke. Had they faltered? Had they refused to meet that barrier of steel? It looked so for a moment. We rose in our trenches and strained our eyes. A line of Russian infantry came up out of a trench far to the right. We paid no heed to each other but all stood transfixed by the unusual sight.

Our charging horsemen parted in the middle and, with a swiftness that threw the Russians into blank amazement and confusion, swung through sharp curves around either flank and came upon the closely-packed enemy from the rear. The lance is an antiquated weapon at best and especially awkward in such an abrupt change of front. Our hussars slashed men and horses right and left. Wherever a horse went down, they pushed into the place and swung wildly to either side. Some bodies fell cut in twain. One poor devil who went down cried for mercy, waving two stumps of arms with both hands severed above the wrist, spattering himself and his neighbor with his blood. I saw one of our hussars,

in his wild fury of slashing, cut down one of our own troopers. Horses reared and screamed in that animal agony which breaks one's nerve. Men cursed and bled—bled.

Again war, war at its ugliest! Man destroying man hand-to-hand in open butchery, rather than by the far-flying missiles of death! A fiery hell, through which no man can come unshaken in mind or body. We in the trenches stood up and watched our companions win against their heavy odds. We cheered like schoolboys. Then we turned away like shame-faced children. As our men came back and the stretcher-bearers went out to collect the dead and wounded, the sun once more hid its face behind the clouds that had collected over the horizon of that bloody morning. I went out to help bring in the wounded. We counted more than four hundred Russian dead.

As we advanced during the day, we came upon one of our machine-gun divisions whose men had been massacred by the Russians, after their ammunition had given out and most of them were wounded. One escaped to tell the tale. After our treatment of their cavalry, who were at our mercy in the morning hours, this enraged us, especially when we found and surrounded the remnant of the lancers who had escaped and the contingent who had maltreated our machine-gunners. It looked to be only a matter of time before we should annihilate them. Dazed and realizing their end, they were apparently in two minds as to what to do, when one of our men called out:

"Do you want some cabbage soup? If so, surrender." Down went their arms and instead of taking vengeance on them, we made them prisoners.

One man's thought of the recently arrived soup kitchen had saved them.





### CHAPTER III

#### THE BIG RETREAT

THE day following this panoramic spectacle of the cavalry fight I rejoined my own regiment and was given a warm welcome back from the list of the missing. An unusual treat was in store for us. We came to a small Polish village of primitive unpainted thatched houses with bits of moss and vegetation growing here and there over the roofs. Plots of vivid green grass and many trees contrasted sharply with the weatherstained, dark-looking houses with their tiny windows. The whole scene made me long for leisure to take the sketch-book from my knapsack and make a record of the many bits that were so sketchable.

But we had other more important matters to attend to. We were given a rest by order of the high



command, the first we had had since we entered the front line weeks before. True, we had from time to time stopped for short periods but only previous to a fixed hour for attack. Now the order had come to check the advance and we were momentarily free.

One square of houses in the village was assigned to our company, and of these one of the dwellings with its surrounding yard to my little group of twelve men. As we entered through the opening in the low wall of rough field stones, we saw half a dozen scared peasant faces peering through the small window beside the door. I gave the men free run of the backyard, reserving the front for my own boudoir.

There was a small stream that ran through the yard and across the street, where it held its channel through the mud that was everywhere in the village. Beside it I unslung my pack, stripped to the waist and had a wonderful wash. I literally scraped the accumulation of dirt from my face and beard and wondered how I could have endured such a coating. While I was washing my shirt and putting on the last fresh one in my kit, the women's faces at the window peered in wonder at me.

Finally when I had changed into the last of my finery, I called to them to know why they did not come out. Through one of our Slovak boys who understood Polish I managed to draw them into conversation. Asked if they were not afraid of the firing, they answered:

"Yes, when the red arrows come in a cloud, then we are afraid; but we pray and have thus far

escaped." Though they spoke of fear, there was no trace of it in their faces. There one found only a childish simplicity and stupidity. Concerning their own, the Russian army they unburdened themselves quite unreservedly, when they saw that we did not wish to maltreat them or steal their things. They talked and gestured with hands and heads, telling of the way the Cossacks took everything, abused their women and beat their men.

One of the older women in the family went back into the house and came out with a pitcher of lobbared milk, which she handed me, at the same time kissing me on the forehead. My Slovak boy, appealed to for an explanation of all this tenderness, found out from her that she had a son in the Russian army whom I resembled, and wanted to do just this little thing for me out of love for her own offspring.

We were all under orders to take nothing from the populace without paying, so I offered them a ten-crown piece for the milk and cheese which they later brought me, as I had no smaller coins with me. This opened their hearts and home to us and seemed to give them a type of enemy difficult for them to comprehend. The rest of the village showed a different spirit. When it was found that our hungry men, with little or no money in their pockets, had taken chicken, geese and other supplies without paying, the commander gave orders for the peasants all to make a list of their losses and he would see that they were reimbursed. When the various claims were totted up, it was found the total loss in chickens alone was over fifty thousand! Their

peasant minds had misinterpreted our wish to be fair and so defeated their own best interests in a true *Æsop's* fable manner.

Foot and mounted orderlies suddenly appeared running through the streets. Commands were being shouted. Our rest was over. All units were to assemble immediately. It was but a matter of minutes when the regiment was drawn up ready to march. But where? What was the next point to be attacked?

We were to turn back! I asked our captain what it meant.

"We are retreating to Lemberg to protect the stores there and the city from threatened attack," he answered. Then our advance had failed! Those fields strewn with dead were to go for nothing!

By six we were all assembled for inspection and re-equipment for a protracted move. For hours we stood and waited the command to march, rumor coming to us that the line of retreat was cut. It was midnight before we finally left the village—and it was within an hour of midnight when we ceased that gruelling tramp the following evening, after having rested for but a single half hour at noon! We covered in that unbroken forced march eighty-seven kilometers, or fifty-four miles. General Ludendorff refers to this in his memoirs of the war as the longest recorded single day's march made during the World War. Some fell asleep and collapsed, but most of us came through. I jerked myself several times from dreams which told me that I had slept as I marched. Others I heard snoring as they walked

beside me. Picture, then, my dismay on arriving near a farm house that following night after eleven and being ordered to enter and draw two maps for the command. It did not seem humanly possible. The nerve that controlled my arm had been so pressed and irritated by my pack that the ends of my fingers were numb. How could I do fine work with them?

But it had to be. The staff officer was there waiting to give the information regarding the position of our forces and must take back this map of our latest positions. As I worked, I had a double reward. My captain came in and told me that he was sending back to headquarters notice of my promotion to second lieutenant, but that I was authorized to wear the insignia of my new rank immediately. The second was a month-old card from home, which some one in the staff had been carrying around. It told me that all university graduates serving with the army, no matter whether they had achieved officer's rank during their year of military training or not, were now automatically to be raised to this grade and that, better still, all art professors were exempt from military service and were to be immediately sent back from the front. My people wrote that these general orders had been issued and that I should probably be free by the time their card reached me.

This single night had thus brought the normalization of my military position from that of corporal, to which my readiness to evade my military training had consigned me, and the unbelievable news

that now I was free to take myself out of the maelstrom of war, which was so far from my nature and training.

From that moment I became the envied of all my fellow-officers, as well as their confidant. One had the tenderest of messages which he begged me to deliver to his mother. Before the fair certainty of death that most of them faced their souls opened to unburden themselves of many things which the experiences of the past weeks had taught them were tormenting. One man in particular wanted me to go and visit a certain household, where a little boy played by his mother but to which no father came. He wanted me to try to make the little fellow know what his father was like and to teach him to respect him, though he was not born in recognized wedlock.

Then there were the messages of hope to fiancées and to relatives and friends. Hour by hour the weight of my responsibility grew. I felt as one returning to the living from the world of the dead.

But I had another journey to make before that one. It was only the second day afterward, if my memory carries true, that I was officially robbed of the fine new horse I had been allowed to buy from a Polish farmer and ordered to form my company into a rear guard to keep in touch with the Russians in every possible way. I was not to try to maintain contact with my regiment or any other body, only to remain ever just within striking range of the enemy and to mislead him into believing there was a considerable body of our army immediately ahead

of him. It looked as though my superior officers were not in sympathy with the idea that art professors should go home. Yet they could not have known how well they were to carry through their opposition—I have not yet been there!

I took my company of forty men and hung behind the main body, as though abandoned by our fellows. One night we came leisurely upon a Polish farmhouse, beautifully situated on the top of a knoll that gave a good outlook in all directions. As evening fell, shooting broke out near us and hurried us into a four-sided formation to await attack from whichever quarter it might come. While we crouched and listened, I heard some one go “Hisst!” behind me to attract attention. Thinking one of my men had important information to communicate, I crawled back to face the Gypsy member of my command, wearing a big leghorn hat and a pair of women’s long white gloves, which he had found in a rubbish heap nearby.

“Look,” he said with childish glee, “I used to be a Gypsy, but now I am a lady.” That was too much comic opera for my overwrought nerves, and I promised him a rich chastising the moment we were free for such matters.

The firing died away without further harm to us. We never knew what it meant. Yet the succeeding days we saw such a sight as made us realize fully the source of any possible amount of deadly punishment for us. As we retreated over the rolling country, we would deploy along ridges from which we could see the Russians coming on in solid col-

umns, with no reconnaissance or advance guard of any sort. On they came in seemingly incredible numbers, cavalry, artillery and infantry, by every available road.

As we moved back before this undulating human flood, we came upon a high railway embankment just at a point where one of our armored trains lay in the middle bend of an S-curve, headed toward the part of the country which would soon be overrun by the enemy. It was in charge of a technical captain with a group of five or six men to man the two machine guns it carried. The captain was for abandoning the train, on the plea that the line was blocked by the enemy in both directions, though technically he was subject to my orders as the commander of a fighting force in the field. I replied to him:

"No! Get up steam and we'll head into the Russians. We may at least do some damage and throw them into confusion."

But the captain had no heart for my idea and went off, leaving with me only his fireman. From a near-by store of wood we piled the engine high, worked the steam up and were off with our iron horse, the fireman in the saddle. By this time my company had dwindled to eighteen. As we gathered speed in our excursion into enemy territory, we rounded the outer curve that suddenly brought us directly upon a column that was leisurely marching across the rails just ahead of us. The peasant soldiers were dazed by our sudden appearance from nowhere and stood and stared, instead of getting

out of our way. In an instant we were among them and actually caught four or five of them on the rails. We were by now going at top speed and saw more of the advancing Russians on either side of the line. Then I gave the order to slow down. What next?

"Are you ready to have another try at them?" I asked my apprentice engineer.

"Surely!" he answered, as he threw the locomotive into reverse. Meantime my men had brought the guns into action and swung them through the double arc, as we again pierced their lines. We were back at our starting point, wondering what to do next. To establish touch with the enemy in the opposite direction seemed to be the natural step, so off we went again.

As we hove in sight of them this time, they waved to us and appeared to be asking to be taken on board. We ran through them and into the country beyond. Of the many thousand miles that I have traveled in my life this was the longest and most eventful one of all. The Russians looked at us as though we were madmen.

In a few moments we were passing rail fences, which indicated that we were approaching a village. For some distance we saw the steeple of the church that towered over the low, thatched houses. As we rolled nearer, we made out a group of peasants, armed with hoes and clubs, gathering to dispute our arrival. But when we came within shouting distance and they saw our uniforms, their hostile attitude changed like magic. As the train



came to a jerky halt and we scrambled down its rusty side, they all began to speak at once, talking in their native Polish and gesticulating wildly with their hands and arms, as though this would aid them individually to gain our personal attention.

"What is wrong, *Dyadushka*?" I asked an old peasant who resembled a picture of Tolstoi that I had seen.

"Eh, Eh, God! You have come too late. They have gone," he moaned, shaking his head from side to side and throwing his arms up in wild despair toward the lowering sky. "They have come and gone. They broke into our houses, robbed us of all we had and drove off our cattle. And look there!" As he pointed with his trembling hand, the excited peasants separated and showed the body of a young girl, torn and bleeding, lying on a pile of sacks and blankets—dying, slowly dying. With mingled rage and tears the old man told us she was the victim of the bestiality of the Cossacks. My blood boiled at the sight of such innocence being made to suffer the pains and pangs of war, thrust upon it by designing statesmen and ambitious militarists. Worse than dying as a soldier, she was being made to suffer the slow agony of unimaginable bodily torment and mental anguish. But that was once more war, and all is fair in war to those to whom war is justified and who profit by war. It was pathetic to see how these simple-minded peasants expected me with my reduced group of now only nine men to right their wrongs and fight the whole Russian army for them.

As we turned away from the examination of the dying girl and the cries and wailing of the women who had gradually mustered up courage to join the group, we were attracted to an entirely different set of sounds that came from a near-by house. They were a mixture of moanings and the tones of despair. Again the peasants gave way for us to pass through. We went to the door of the low house and entered. Never have I been surrounded by such an atmosphere of absolute despair. There were at least thirty Jews, young and old, in that single room. Some, especially the old, bearded patriarchs, lay flat on the floor with their foreheads pressed against the rough boards. Beside them was a very young girl who had suffered the same fate as the one we had just seen.

To a man they were numb with fear and terror. They were not weeping any more nor crying out. Just groans and indescribable sounds issued from some of them, while others only stared and looked stupefied.

But we had no time to investigate further the condition of the village. The rumble of the heavy artillery was growing nearer, so that we were not sure we might not already have been surrounded. We retired to the safest place, our armored train. We were tired, deadly tired after a hard day full of the most varied experiences and after having had very little rest throughout that entire week. Leaving one man on guard, we lay down to sleep.

How long we slept I have no idea, but remember only being awakened by the explosion of a shell just

near our car. What a sight met our eyes! Through the gun slits we saw that the village was on fire. Our car was filled with the smoke and fumes of burning wood and hay. Not only the village but the forest that surrounded it was all in flames. We were just preparing to jump out, when we saw a troop of Russian cavalry come thundering by. As the smoke in the car was becoming suffocating and no longer endurable, we dropped quietly down, one by one, on the side of the train that was in shadow. We ran between burning stacks of grain and through smoldering stubble around them straight in the direction of the heavy guns, which I recognized as our own through the particular type of firing employed by our gunners. I did not know anything about the lay of the land, but always plunged blindly through the night toward the booming of the guns.

We came to a swamp, which was just enough frozen for the thin ice to break under our weight and cut through our thin, worn puttees, letting us down into the icy water. We forged ahead, helping one another, carrying here a rifle for one who became fagged, pulling another out of the thick weeds and muck of the swamp. All night we struggled across the swampy valley between two wooded elevations that were literally ablaze with hellish fireworks of star-shells, fire-shells and bursting shrapnel. Eventually we reached the black woods on the farther side, throwing ourselves flat on the ground whenever a shell came whining by—our own now.

Sometimes stumbling, many times falling and always cursing, we pushed on until we dropped totally exhausted and could not move further.

Morning and safety! We had reached our own lines.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE UTMOST

**I**T WAS the following morning. I awoke out of a delirious sleep, with my eyes and throat swollen. I could hardly move my arms. There was a strange, almost mysterious silence. Officers were standing around in little groups. One of them had come over to me and was looking down at me.

“We thought you were dead. You didn’t know that we have been attacked while you were asleep?”

My nerves seemed to have entirely given out on me. I had slept through it all. Sleep was all that I had any thought for. Then there was upon me a strong presentiment that something awful would that day happen to me. The surroundings, however, appeared to point to quite the opposite. We seemed promised a respite. Just nearby were the

division and the corps commanders. Once more back among my staff superiors, I took advantage of the occasion to ask whether the colonel's aide had orders for my retirement from the service. He did not even know that they had an "art professor" in the regiment.

"Anyway, with three hundred thousand Russians on our heels, we have something more important to do than to retire officers from the line." So I dropped for the time being any further attempt to press the question. Instead I received the command to take my company and go into the third line, preparatory to the general attack that was being organized.

My unit was now quite changed. During the retreat back through the Austrian country the high command had pressed into the ranks all the young men who were not yet old enough for military training but who were not to be left for the enemy to capture and make use of. So I had nothing but the rawest of recruits with only a few of the older men among them.

The big guns were shooting over us. We ducked our heads instinctively under the concussion of the detonations. Sharpshooters were keeping up an incessant fire, until their barrels became so hot they could not hold them. I felt so tired that I no longer cared, I leaned against the trench exhausted. I had no interest in what went on around me. My nerves had reached the breaking point. Fate, after promising so quiet a day, had thrown me back into

this hell of noise and strain. My superior lieutenant came by.

"You look awful and need sleep. Come back to my hole." Without a word I followed him to his dugout and was soon wrapped in a blanket, lying on his straw cot. He brought me some whiskey and chocolate and started to tell me what had happened since I left them at the fork in the road.

However, the story did not last long, as he was called away and I was ordered to move forward once more with my company of recruits. The promised rest was gone forever. We were to penetrate the forest to meet the oncoming enemy. I realized that, in this type of warfare, there was no such thing as sickness or fatigue until you dropped. In spite of our clumsiness and slowness we were again in the fighting line at the beginning of a desperate battle.

Nor were we to be left near the clumps of bushes at the edge of the woods which I had selected as our fighting line. A battalion commander of the abutting regiment called to us not to hold back the line but to go ahead another two hundred yards, so that I once more found myself in the old familiar position of first contact point with the enemy. With the scared and trembling recruits, some of them not eighteen years of age, I crawled forward and observed a scout plane circling round and round above a small clearing in the forest, like a dragon-fly over a shady pool. With a swoop like a flash of lightning it dropped toward the ground and let go a small yellow flag.

At that signal hell broke loose. Thousands of angry guns roared their warnings of destruction and sent their deadly missiles into the ranks of the enemy. Moment by moment we pushed slowly forward toward the edge of the forest, which fringed the top of a hill from which we could look down into the valley below and watch the thousands upon thousands of Russians streaming down the opposite slope—moving steadily onward like a great stream of lava. Shells fell into their ranks, annihilating companies and battalions, throwing masses of bodies into the air, digging great holes in the earth, tearing away rocks and cliffs and burying the moving mass beneath them. Still those endless columns of men came on, in ever growing masses, despite the destructive fire of our guns. They made no attempts at digging in and fighting behind cover but just came on as though they were cavalry forced to work in the open. Like wave upon wave of some overpowering pestilential flood they kept flowing into the valley.

I ran out on a little ledge that lay at the top of a precipice, in order to make sure that we were safe from that side. The masses of Russians were being swallowed by the forest below us. They would soon be here. In a hole near-by one of our soldiers was waving a letter toward me. I immediately recognized him as a schoolmate of mine. He handed me the letter, asked "Have you anything to eat?" and sank down and rolled over the cliff before I could catch hold of him. He had been shot through the heart.



A letter from home! He had been carrying it for days to deliver to me when I should return to the company. What could it mean? I tore it open and read greedily. For a moment I stood motionless and then dropped the sheet from my nerveless hands. My father was dead! Dead like all these others who lay around in such ghastly confusion.

I was still dazed and like one in a dream, when I suddenly perceived some Russians peeping out of the shrubbery on my left. I raised my rifle and ordered them to come out. They stared at me indecisively. Again I called more harshly, and this time they threw down their guns and stepped out. As the last of the rifles struck the ground, it went off and wounded me in the fourth finger of my right hand. It was very painful. The Russians stared at me with frightened faces. They thought for this we would kill them all. I accepted the help of one of them to dress my hand and sent the six of them to the rear.

By this time the whole field immediately in front of us was occupied by the enemy. We should have withdrawn, I suppose, but a sort of apathy held me. They came on with ever thickening line, as ours grew momentarily thinner. I could not say which of my men were dead and which were just lying quiet behind their cover.

Once more—and for the last time—I put up a bluff. That can mean a lot in war time. The enemy were already breaking past on our right flank. We shifted to a position behind them and attacked them in the rear. Those who could, fled. The rest

surrendered. As one Russian fell with a bullet through his leg, his "buddy" stopped, picked him up, and taking him over his shoulder started back toward their own lines. A soldier never fails to admire bravery in his enemy, and they certainly showed it on this occasion. No one fired at the slowly retreating figure. Instead they cheered him on, shouting all kinds of encouragement and praise. That also is fortunately a part of war.

But once more they came on in overwhelming numbers. We were in for a battle royal.

"Up and at 'em, boys!" I shouted, as we turned back in a bayonet charge up the slight incline that now lay in front of us.

"*Doloi!*" (Down!) shouted a Russian officer just above me, as he lunged at me in an attempt to knock my rifle out of my hands. I made a counter-thrust and ran my bayonet between his ribs. In the same instant a bullet struck my right hand, in which I was grasping my rifle. The ball ran along the same finger that had been wounded by the accident just a little while previous and then passed through the fleshy part of the thumb. But what was worse, it shattered the rifle, separating the barrel from the stock and driving a sliver of the latter so deep into the flesh at the base of the palm that it hung there, a great piece which I had to pull out with my other hand. I jumped backward without turning my face, but it was too late.

One of the dozen Russian soldiers around the officer leaped at me and thrust his long bayonet into the right side of my abdomen. He discharged his

rifle also, as he lunged, shooting away one of my floating ribs. I fell backward. The one overpowering sensation that welled up through the cruel pain was that of a great weight, hung upon a hook that was pulling down in the wound and dragging me to the earth, yet I could not go. I was held up by something, when I wanted to sink farther and farther.

I can dimly remember a tall Russian warding off two others who wanted to pounce on me and finish the job their companion had started. One of them got so far as thrusting his bayonet into the socket of my left eye, fortunately just close enough to the bone not to touch the eyeball itself. I managed to clutch the blade with my left hand as it was entering the socket, cutting my hand to the bone in the effort. Holding it, I jerked my head to the right and freed myself from the bayonet point. They were so enraged at me for having slain their officer that they stamped on my head and kicked me in the shoulder to add to my already sickening pain.

They surely would have finished me off, if another wave of them had not come up, driven forward by their officers with drawn revolvers, and forced the group around me to move on in the forward rush. As they left me, my single thought to fight in defense of my life gave way to a realization of the pain. I rolled from side to side to try to find some position where I could lie without shrieking from the agony. I reached for my flask

and found it empty. Nor had I any emergency kit for my seven wounds.

After about an hour I saw a young Russian soldier moving cautiously toward me, circling as a dog does around something of which it is half-afraid. Finally he came to me, loosed my kit and coat, took a clean towel from my knapsack and with it tried to staunch my stomach wound. I was almost sure that he was the one who had bayoneted me. It was evidently his desire to come back and make up for what he had been compelled to do in his rôle of soldier.

As he bared my abdomen and I moved to one side, my intestines pressed out through the long gash the bayonet and rifle bullet had made. He turned away in disgust, making a strong gesture of utter uselessness and left me there to die.

I lay in a small dip just above the upturned roots of a tree. The cold night was coming rapidly. I was consumed with thirst. My tongue had swollen to twice its size and was quite numb. In my craving for something to quench the awful thirst, I chewed all the grass I could reach.

Before full darkness fell, another Russian soldier stole up in a peculiar manner. Although he came direct to where I lay, he seemed to have something mysterious in his approach. I did not know whether he wanted to kill me or what he would do. Without a single word to me, he kneeled down close and looked in my face. Then he asked in the purest of Berlin German:

"Can you walk? Just try; I can help you to your lines."

As I tried to raise myself, I discovered that my left leg was paralyzed. I sank back, bleeding profusely and in an agony of pain. My last hope was gone. I could not walk. He was a huge man, taller even than I and tremendously broad. So he tried to put me on his back, but the pain was so unbearable that I yelled and had to be put down. He left me, saying that he would come back at once. He soon did return, carrying three of the Russian soldier blanket rolls, which he had salvaged from some of his dead comrades.

Spreading one on the ground, he made me a comfortable pillow from my coat and covered me with the other two. Then, patting me gently, he told me he would bring me some help and went away. I never saw him again.

In the darkness I heard the moaning and groaning of the severely wounded and dying on the field around me. Terrific pains shot through me, and cramps seized my intestines. I cried aloud with each spasm until I must have lost consciousness.

Over my body galloped huge, mad horses, ridden by hideous monsters . . . They were swinging their heads in their hands and waving their bloody swords in the moonlight . . . A multitude of them swarmed over my helpless carcass . . . In their mad gallop the horses dug their hoofs deep into my wounds . . . The monsters dragged me along behind them . . . I tried desperately to resist . . . to rise . . . to shake off the nightmare. Look-

ing about, bewildered by my surroundings, I saw that all was now quiet in the dark fields. Only the delirious visions played their merciless tricks with my distraught mind—a sure sign of blood-poisoning!



## CHAPTER V

### LES JOURS D'AGONIE!

AGAIN I fell into a stupor which must have lasted until the next morning. My body was entirely paralyzed, but I suffered less pain. The wound in my eye had become bearable, but my right hand, with the bone exposed in places and with the nail on my finger split by the bullet, became enormously swollen and looked like a small boxing glove. It was almost black. I must have been hideous, judging from the expressions of the Russians who began patrolling the field in small groups. Some of them looked down at me, made the sign of the cross and muttered:

*"Raneny! Raneny! (Wounded!)"*

*"Voda! Voda! (Water!)"* I groaned, but none of them had any.

Finally a small body of horsemen came up and dismounted. The well-trained animals lay down at once. One of the men, hearing my cry, started to reach for his canteen, when suddenly a shell ex-

ploded over their heads and killed one of them. The others mounted and rode off at a wild gallop. Instead of water I got a shell splinter in my hand! As they went, I reached for my knapsack to cover and protect my face from the flying dirt and shell shards. As I turned my right hand outward for additional protection, a splinter pierced it like an arrow head. It burned like fire. My hand was already so sensitive from the other wounds that I could scarcely bear the pain. I tried to pull it out, but could not. It seemed to have a barbed point that buried itself in between the bones.

The fight continued and a storm was brewing in the west. But nature was merciful to me and sent me off into another stupor that lasted until late in the morning of the following day.

Once more I awoke in the midst of an onslaught. The Russians had prepared a further attack on our lines and were already advancing. Several of them pointed their bayonets at me as though to kill me, but their officers with sharp commands forced them to desist. After all, many of those Russians were very human.

Then there came another hellish rain of shrapnel and bullets from our lines, wiping out entire bodies of the enemy. Up came the next unit, only to meet the same fate. For the first time in all my unusual experiences I had now the chance to live right in a firing-line and watch men drop around me, passively observing what fear made of different individuals and how the flying bullets showed no favor between brave ones and cowards. The bodies



were piled on one another like drifted sand, driven by the raging winds of war. As whole battalions met the same fate, the new-comers were more and more demoralized by the terrible results of our fire. No one now paid the slightest attention to me. Their fear-filled eyes were fixed on the horizon from which their peril came.

How ugly all this was! The fighting and its results were no longer of any interest to me. I belonged to that class of young men and old men, intellectuals and peasants, who moved past me and fell—most of them forever.

Another day, the fourth in this extraordinary situation. My mind seemed to have exhausted its ability to endure the constant suffering and turned me back by a curious trick into a vivid contemplation of my whole life, from childhood to the latest years, enjoying over again all the little episodes and details that go to make up one's happiness. I found myself back in the small town of my childhood, marching down the middle of the street, with all the pretty girls dressed in immaculate white with many flowers about them. Then I came to our old home and found my sisters also in white, as though it were Easter. They chided me for being so dirty in my battle-stained uniform and asked why I was not dressed for their joyful gathering. I laughed over with them so many of the happy, innocent jokes which had been lived in earlier days.

The machine-guns broke in with their rattle to rob me of my happy reveries. Our forces were preparing for an attack. Optimism mounts at the

slightest chance under circumstances like these. I found myself wondering if our men really would come out to get me, take me back to the hospital and send me home. I found myself dreaming of the white bed with my mother and sisters sitting on the edge of it, listening to the tale of my experiences.

But here they come again—the murderers. They start again their foolish fighting. They set loose their merciless demons of destruction. I hate them, I pity them and . . . forget them and soon fall into a relieving, deep slumber.

The sun of the fifth day was shining down upon me—an awful day for me. I no longer gave a thought to being found. My mind was filled with a bitter indifference to everything. Perhaps the Russians would come to bury their dead. I turned my entire attention to my wounds. The one in my abdomen had ceased to be so critical and sensitive. On the second or third day I had tried to press back my intestines, but could not bear the pain either around the wound or in my hands. Now I managed to get them in past the less sensitive edges, although they were now almost black and stiff from the dried blood. My right hand had become worse, as the piece of shrapnel had evidently caused blood-poisoning. I tried again to remove it but was too weak.

A few ugly Russians were moving about among the dead, taking what valuables they could find on their fallen comrades. One took my watch and slowly slipped it into his own pocket, watching me very carefully to see what I would do. I never

remember looking into a more repulsive face than his. They even cut off the fingers of those whose hands held rings clutched tight in the convulsed grasp of death.

As night approached, our artillery started another bombardment. A fireshell exploded in a big stack of hay quite near me, setting it in flames. The smoke from the damp pile hung close to the



ground and for an hour so filled my eyes, throat and lungs that it was a question whether I could escape suffocation. Half dazed I crawled out of the hole from between the blankets that had protected me against missiles and cold, for the first time realizing fully the weakened condition of my body. But I kept on crawling. Suddenly I saw a rabbit come out of the brush before me, looking frightened and making off at once. Trusting to his animal instinct, I followed his lead. Unable to use either my left leg or my right hand, I made very poor

headway. After hours of struggling, I had gone but a few hundred yards, owing to several collapses. Some Russian patrols passed within a few feet of me, showing by their loud talk that their enemy must now be far away.

At last I came upon a dark mass, with several figures kneeling about it, and holding their rifles in readiness. When I arrived within hailing distance, I shouted in every language of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy:

"Don't shoot! Friend! Your own wounded!" No answer. I crawled carefully closer to them and found out that I had been calling to dead men. They were the guard about an ammunition wagon. Many of them still kept half-standing, natural positions. I rolled under the wagon, my teeth chattering so with the cold that I was forced to press my chin with my hand to keep from being heard by passing patrols.

The wound in my abdomen started to bleed again and, although near a burning forest, I shivered and froze until I lost consciousness.

Very early the next morning from the hill where I lay I could see Russians retreating toward their lines, dragging their machine-guns after them. Near me lay several loaded rifles. Driven by some irresistible impulse, I reached for one and, although I suffered much pain in doing so, fired three shots, wounding two men. They were taken up by their comrades and borne away. Realizing that what I had done was contrary to my every instinct, I threw the gun away in disgust and attempted to stand

upright by grasping a wheel of the wagon. With the aid of two bean-poles which lay near-by, I started in the direction of the forest that was before me.

All about there were many dead, with little patches of snow drifted under their bodies or between their frozen arms, making them look very cold. Suddenly my eyes spied something, the greatest thing in the world for me at that moment—several water-bottles scattered about the ground. I fell to my knees and emptied the first one. I really could not believe it was water, the one thing I had been craving all these days. Oh God! how wonderful, how refreshing after six days of agony without a drop to drink! It was like a tonic, entering immediately into my veins, circulating all over my body. I seemed actually to feel it coursing down my arms.

I drank another bottle and then a third. The fountain of life—water! I drank until I could not swallow. I reached for the sixth to take it with me. Just as I did so, I heard a disturbing noise and looked a short distance away. My sight had been restored by the water and I felt almost normal for the moment, so great was the change the fluid had wrought. Not more than six yards away was a thick line of Russians, watching me in amazement. A few of them threw their rifles into position as though they would shoot. I bared my breast. An officer rose and gave a sign with a wave of his hand, beckoning me to come on and ordering the men to desist.

Two men came out, seized me just as I was col-

lapsing and carried me gently behind their line. The officer started to question me in broken German, but I gave no answers. Then he gave me a piece of black bread and a little sugar, but I did not eat them, as I had no feeling of hunger—rather a revulsion to the idea of food.

Not ten minutes after I was taken behind their line our artillery began another bombardment. To escape the fire of our own guns, I started to crawl down the hill across a thinly wooded terrain. Every time a shell exploded in front of me, I crawled to the edge of the hole, knowing the method of our fire. The Russians began running in all directions and left me once more to my changing fate. For over an hour I passed thus from shell-hole to shell-hole, coming finally out of the range of our guns as they swung through another arc.

Finally I managed to stand again and work slowly forward. There, coming directly toward me, was a group of stretcher-bearers with Red Cross brassards on their arms. I thought that now they would surely take me, but they only pointed over the next hill and said:

*“Doktor tam! (The doctor is over there!)”*

I went forward once more, wondering if this would be the last stage of my ordeal. Stumbling slowly along, holding to trees for support during my frequent dizzy spells, I passed many groups of Russians eating their noon-day soup. Some smiled at me; others invited me to share their rations with them. But I had an aversion for even the thought of

food and just kept plodding forward for seemingly interminable hours.

The sun was nearing the horizon as I came to a small stream. I waded in but could not scramble up the farther bank and fell back into the water. I lay there exhausted and chilled, until some soldiers came to my help, pulled me out and carried me to a group of officers. They put me down on the ground, pillowing my head on a rock, where they questioned me about our positions. One of them spoke to me in perfect Hungarian. He laughed at me for staring in wonder at him, explaining for my benefit that he had worked for the Russian secret service in upper Hungary for years, where he acted as a waiter in a café frequented by high-rank army officers. He even secured jobs as peddler and mail carrier to ferret out our secrets.

"A pretty dirty profession," I remarked, trying to take the wind out of his sails. He helped me up. The last two hundred yards, supported by a soldier, I walked before the curious eyes of two thick lines of resting Russians. At the end of this human alley there hung between two trees a large white flag with a red cross in the center. No, this time I was not mistaken. They gave my wounds an emergency dressing and laid me on a pallet of loose straw beneath a tree with three of their own wounded near. I felt safe at last. They would take care of me. I did not need to remain awake any longer. . . .



## CHAPTER VI

### THE BACK-STAGE OF THE WAR

**L**OUD talking and glaring torches thrust into my face roused me out of my deep slumber. The weird, strong light so close to my eyes gave me again the hallucination of being in a burning village. As I raised myself in fear and wonder, a big hand pushed me back. A fat Russian doctor stood beside me, clad in a white surgeon's coat, spattered with blood.

"Lie still," he commanded in broken German, "we must operate on you."

With him were two helpers holding torches on either side of my head to give him light to work. Other assistants had the instruments boiling over an alcohol lamp. They pushed more straw under me and thus made my body more nearly level, for there was no operating table. That was a detail that I did not mind so much as the other shortage in the ordinary equipment of the operating room—the entire lack of anesthetics.



I shall not attempt to describe my experience in detail, as it was a most barbaric proceeding. They bared my body to the cold night air and went to work by the light of the flaming torches. The surgeon used his ice-cold knife and scissors freely, snipping off the ragged ends of the intestines, sewing them together, putting them back into place and filling the wound with gauze. I lay watching them in the flickering light, helpless to protest and knowing that only through this crude help was there any possibility of continued life. With gauze and pad they kept the wound open and covered all with a liberal winding of bandages.

Then I showed the surgeon my hand, which he was for passing as not of sufficient importance in this hour when so many major operations were pressing. But I pointed out the shrapnel splinter, which he immediately took hold of, in order to remove it with his fingers. But even with repeated efforts it would not come. He had finally to close on it with some sort of an instrument, and I thought he would drag all the bones through my palm. He examined the swollen member and simply shook his head, saying he could do nothing for it.

It all took the greatest part of an hour, during which I suffered a thousand agonies. However, the end finally came. As the surgeon finished, he cautioned me:

"Be quiet or you will go to hell!"

Once more Nature stepped in to take pity on me. Shivering and feverish, I lost consciousness before I could even thank him for what he had done. . . .

Deep strains of a sad, religious music brought me to myself. Raising my head, I saw a Russian orthodox priest, surrounded by soldiers bearing candles that flickered and wavered in the darkness of the early morning hour. He was pronouncing the final benediction over a mass burial. He swung a censer out over the great trench in which lay literally hundreds of the dead of both armies. There were five or six rows of them, stretching off into the shroud of the night. The whole scene made a deep impression on me, particularly in those hours when I did not know how long it would be before the torches that had been held at my head would be changed for the candles of the acolytes. I took off my cap out of respect for the dead.

"It is pretty cold," said a voice at my side. Looking up, I saw another doctor, scrutinizing me. "Better put your cap on. Tell me," he continued, "do your people treat the wounded the same as we do?" I nodded affirmatively.

"That's what I thought," he went on. "You are a civilized people. . . . What is your profession?" As I answered him:

"Professor of art," he became very cordial and sat down beside me.

"A fine experience for the rest of your life."

"Which will be but a short time," I replied pessimistically.

"Bah! They certainly made a mess of you," he half-laughed, looking at my bandaged hands, head, abdomen and leg, "but there is no chance of your

dying now. You have passed the first four days, when stomach wounds are the most dangerous."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Absolutely, your troubles are over now. By the time you come out of the hospital the war may be over." What a colossal naïveté, one that I shared with so many others in that autumn of 1914.

The following morning the three other wounded who shared the shelter of my tree, lay very still. A doctor passed and pointed them out to a sanitary orderly, who took them by the feet and dragged them down the bumpy road to their last resting place. By what a narrow margin I had escaped their way of leaving our common shelter! For me the departure was bad enough, however; for they put me into a farm wagon, cushioned with a little hay, and drove me for hours over the rough roads in such a manner that every stitch pulled separately. I wished honestly that they never had found me.

After half a day of this torture they brought me to a farm house, where they carried me in and deposited me on a pile of straw under a piano. I slept for the first time since the beginning of the war under a roof. The heavy, close atmosphere of the peasant house, together with the smell of blood and dirt and the pungent odor of carbolic acid, almost suffocated me. From the adjoining room, which was being used for operations, came the constant screams and animal-like yells of the men going under the knife. It made me shiver all over. A young doctor came out from time to time, sat down at the piano and played with all his energy some of the liveliest

of music. His nerves had apparently given out under the strain, and he sought this way of quieting them.

The next morning they again piled us into farm wagons and drove us off. With me were two Cossacks, one of whom had a lost a leg and the other an arm. I had four cigars in my pocket, which had been given me by one of the officers where they pulled me out of the stream. I had the tips of a thumb and finger of my right hand outside the bandage and so managed to light one for my first smoke in many days. As I puffed, one of the Cossacks grew fidgety, then laughingly reached over and took the cigar from my mouth and later passed it to his companion, who in turn took several pulls at it and then restored it to its original place. This went on until the end went overboard.

Hardly had we finished our companionable indulgence when a shell burst over our train of wounded and frightened the horses into running away, turning out many of the poor sufferers along the roadside. This time we passed through towns crowded with refugees from the country, our own Province of Galicia, where the people frequently crowded round the few of us from the Austrian army to inquire anxiously for friends and loved ones. The poor souls were thrust back by the Cossack guard, who used their whips on them mercilessly. An old woman, however, who carried something under her dress, managed to come close to me and threw some juicy plums into my lap. My sharing of them with

the Cossacks quite changed their attitude toward me.

We finally reached the old town of Zolkiew, where we were put into the modern military barracks which formerly belonged to one of our cavalry regiments but which was now dirty beyond recognition. In a room designed for two occupants we counted twenty, stretched side by side on the floor. For two nights and a day no one came to us. The window panes were all broken, and outside a snow storm was raging. In spite of the cold I kept my head as near to the window opening as possible to get the fresh air.

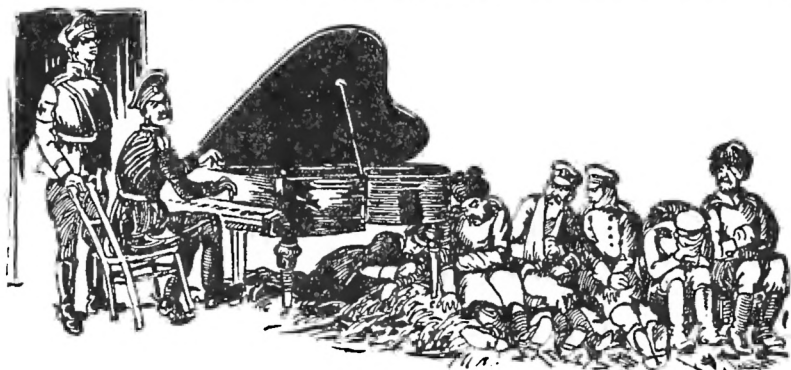
The first night two of the Russians who had suffered from head wounds went mad and tried to strangle any to whom they could crawl. There was no light in the room. It became a night of madness with screaming and cursing and fighting off the crazed devils who wanted to attack their companions.

Only on the second morning did any one appear—a young Red Cross nurse who ordered us given boiled rice. Though it was served in a pail which had previously been used for washing horses and which showed plainly its lineage, it tasted very good to us hungry souls.

It was that same afternoon that I beheld an unusual sight through my window, which gave on an open space where the cavalry had drilled and exercised. Constant streams of wagons piled high with ammunition and provisions were passing across it, until suddenly an electric current of activity charged

the atmosphere. The wagons were driven hurriedly off, officers rode about giving commands to a corps of men that were brought in to furbish and clean. They left, however, the pile of dead that had been taken from our barracks and had not yet been buried.

After a time, a big, gray automobile appeared, followed by a dozen others. As they drew up, a tall, thin figure of a man, straight as an arrow, stepped out. Moving slowly, he listened to the reports of



the assembled officers. From other cars a number of laughing women descended, jesting and making sport as they gathered on the *place*. Some of them posed with captured Austrian rifles in their hands for their companions to make snapshots of them. One was even so brazen and soulless as to have her picture taken pointing a bayonet at one of the dead Austrian soldiers who lay awaiting burial. Nothing that I saw during the whole war so disgusted me as the wanton ribaldry of these women and their entire lack of sympathy for their surroundings.

As the party re-entered their cars and drove away,

I had my belief confirmed that the tall man was none other than Nikolai Nikolaievitch, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies.

Then an entirely different picture was set in the square before me. Thousands of ragged, homeless people escaping from the battle area came pouring into the town, some in farm carts and wagons and some walking, carrying their crying babies in their bony arms. Most of them were old and broken, the majority of them women—a sharp contrast to the former scene in the square. This touched me deeply and made my heart bleed.

The next stage of our transportation was the most trying one of all. For two days we were constantly pumped and jolted along the roughest of roads, being momentarily thrown from one side to the other. The hay beneath me was gradually eaten up by the hungry horses drawing the following wagon, whose heads were always bumping into mine at every stop. By the time we reached our destination I was lying with my head practically on the bare boards of the wagon-bottom and my feet up in the air.

It was Lemberg, the Lemberg we had started to defend from that little Polish village where I had had my first chance to wash and where our retreat began! It was Lemberg, the once gay city of yesterday, capital of the Polish Province of Galicia! We entered toward sunset. What a change! The inhabitants were the kindest people I came across during the war, but the city had grown old like an aged woman, plodding onward wearily under the load of a crushing burden. Everywhere there were stretch-

ers, on the sidewalks and even sticking through the windows of all the tram cars which we saw moving as we came in. Not only through the windows but on the tops of some of them the ominous emblems of the war proclaimed the suffering of men.

As we drove through the streets, the populace cheered us and threw all kinds of foodstuffs into our wagons. It was a happy moment to be among real friends again, but only a short one, for along come the Cossacks with their wicked *nagaikas* and beat off the people.

The search for a hospital now started. No room anywhere, from cellar to attic. The wounded even lay in the gardens and on the sidewalks in front of the hospitals. To add to our troubles the streets of Lemberg were paved with round cobbles, which jolted my wagon so unbearably that I finally begged to be put down anywhere rather than go on. I was taken to the station to see whether I could be transported into Russia by train. The decision was against this, so that the search continued. Finally our line of wagons dwindled to my single one, and toward the morning hours the peasant driver showed distinct signs of looking for a place to roll me out, so that he could be rid of me and rest. At last, when it was already four o'clock, a place was found far out in the suburbs in a former girls' school, managed by the nuns of a Catholic sisterhood.

For the first hour I had to rest on the lawn in the garden and then was laid among many others in one of the drafty corridors. Later, when they carried out one who was beyond need of further aid, they



put me in his bed in a large room on the third floor. A nun, quiet and peaceful as a breath from heaven, stood at my bedside with a tray carrying rice and tea. I was being served! I had only to reach out and take clean, delicious food. I could hardly believe that such a thing really existed. I fell into a state of being somewhere far away—I felt nothing more.

For two days the small staff of overworked doctors did not have time to reach our room. All the slight improvement my wounds had made in the first days of hospital had been more than nullified by the terrible jouncing about of the two days of rough travel. Dear old Professor Lenko finally came, looked at my hand and shook his head.

"We'll have to amputate," he said.

"Never, in God's name!" I shouted back at him. "I'll jump the three stories and run for it before letting you do that!"

"Then we'll amputate while you are asleep," he replied firmly.

"That's simple enough—I won't sleep!"

Just then his associate, Dr. Prashil, a renowned surgeon of Lemberg, came up, examined my hand and asked:

"What is your profession?"

"I am an artist and I shall be lost without my hand." After a silence, during which he gazed at the puffed and blackened member, he slowly observed:

"Even if we should try to save it, it would be very difficult and you would have to be very quiet

and composed, putting your mind at ease and working with us."

He proceeded to puncture the flesh in different places and inserted little rubber tubes as drains; all this again without any anesthetic. The pain in the supersensitive flesh was too terrible to attempt to describe. The next morning he came, looked at the hand and exclaimed:

"Good Lord! It is as good as saved. That is what putting your mind at ease does."



"Nothing of the kind," I answered. "I did not go to sleep at all for fear of losing my hand. I stayed awake all night, squeezing the dirt and pus from the wound. I saw it go down and felt better." He only smiled, cleansed my wound, ordered some food for me and went away.

Among the wounded there were many unconscious ones whose nationality puzzled the doctors. The only way of distinguishing them was by the manner and sounds of their moaning.

"Oh-veh! Oh-veh!" marked the suffering man as

a German. "Ya-i! Ya-i!" told that he was Hungarian. "Ou-i! Ou-i!" came as the sad note of the Russian.

One of my own countrymen, who had a cot just opposite me and whom I could see by raising my head just a little, was wounded in the head and, as was so often the case with head-wounded patients, talked with clarity and distinctness but without himself being at all conscious of what he was saying. His subconscious mind carried on a never-ending flow of conversation with all the members of his family, so that I gradually became acquainted with each one of them as intimately as though he were doing his best to describe them to me. To the oldest of his daughters, Julia, who was apt to be careless, he spoke with frequent warning. One time it would be:

"That's not the way to hold the baby! . . . Don't give the food to the pigs too warm." To his second daughter, Rose, he always showed more tenderness.

"You must take good care of little Joseph. . . . Cover them well before you go to bed."

Another of these unconscious ones who talked almost as continuously was a merchant, evidently giving instructions all the day long to his salesmen or assistants, for he told them at one minute just how they must describe the goods they had to offer and at another warned them not to say so and so about the merchandise.

A third, dark-haired and waxen-featured, was making love to his sweetheart, calling her his light of life, his sunshine, and making all kinds of plans

for their future together. He would rave in his delirium:

“You will see how we shall live, and you will have no reason to complain or to compare me with Joe or any of the others.”

Lord, how queer it all was—and how senseless to make these creatures suffer such torment! But they all disappeared and found their way to a common grave in some barren field—every single one of them who were with me in that room of mortally wounded. I was the sole survivor of that original group!

But life there was not always one morbid dream. The Countess Drednowska organized a staff, composed of the prettiest girls in the city, and had them visit the hospitals every single day. When one is entirely cut off from his own and lonely in the midst of such suffering, a woman's smile and the fresh spirit of youth she radiates are worth all the medicine the doctors can supply. With their smiles they brought us also books, cigarettes and everything to winter socks. But for me the privilege of friendship with the Countess counted for far more than all the material gifts they brought to us. I left my diary with her in the hope that our troops would soon occupy the town again and that my record could then be sent home to my mother. This came to pass six months later, when our army retook Lemberg and my brother entered the city as commander of a battalion of the 28th chasseurs, called at the address and secured the first news they had from me of my experiences in the war.

Even Humor can find her way down the dark corridors of such a hospital. The shortage of men's underwear often led to some embarrassing make-shifts. I laughed until the real stitches in my side pulled me up with a round turn, when I watched great, brawny Russians going down the aisle, clad in the filmy garments of the gentler sex—especially



when I saw them trying to get out unobserved by the nurses and superconscious of the inadequacy of their scanty garments.

Brooms also served the place of crutches and made the corridors look like a puppet-show.

Beside the occasional bits of humor there was one great event that stood out in my month in this first real hospital, though it nearly cost me dear. When my wounds were sufficiently healed after nearly four weeks of rest, I expressed one day to a

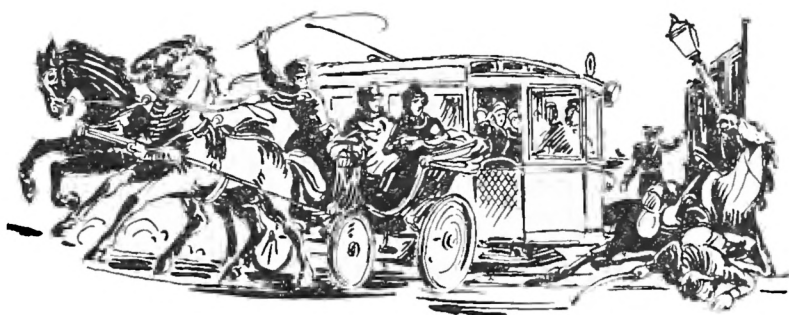
member of Countess Drednowska's visitors my great regret at not seeing something of Lemberg before the departure which was now scheduled for the very near future. She appeared the next day with a mischievous smile and suggested that we might accomplish my wish, if I were not afraid of running a bit counter to hospital regulations. Against all the rules we managed to slip out to where her carriage was waiting and hurried away.

It was a dream, the free air again, away from all the suffering that had been around me and next to one of my own kind. But it was not for long, for we were driving past a detachment of Cherkess Cossacks, those egregiously cruel Mohammedan soldiers of the Tsar whose deeds make the bravest of the Russians shudder. They took exception to seeing an officer of the enemy in full uniform driving out with a young lady. One of their company suddenly spurred his horse from the ranks and started after us with his wicked-looking curved sword drawn and swinging. Our coachman, a young Polish boy, was so frightened that he lashed his horses and went tearing down the street. Even then it was only the fortuitous intervention of a street car that saved us from whatever terror the Cherkess had in mind for us. I was cold with fear for what might happen to my benefactress and blamed myself for the folly of our escapade.

We knocked over a mounted gendarme just as we were approaching the street car and then swung around the car in such a way that the fine white

mount of the following Cossack was hit squarely by it and thrown against a lamp-post with such force as to break the post and injure the Cherkess so badly that he later died in a hospital.

Our coachman dived into a side street, drove from one to another and finally into the residential district where the castle of my young guide was situated in a dreamland of trees and flowers. Once within the gate, the driver hurried down and barred the entrance and then drove us to the door.



After the first excitement had passed, my young hospital visitor was quite thrilled with the escape we had had and made the hours I spent with her and her family memorable ones in my Odyssey. Refined people, the charming mother as hostess, the music and the understanding of those of one's own kind—it was one of my real fortunes of war. What a contrast when I returned to the hospital! I waited until it was dark and followed a circuitous route, so that no one might trace me back to my benefactors to make trouble for them.

Under the influence of the atmosphere of this

charming home, I was saddened and dissatisfied with my hospital surroundings. The doctor was very angry and had sent a guard out to search for me. When I looked very meek and smiled at him, he said something in German to the effect:

“Well, did you at least have a nice time?” and left me without further penalty for my breach of rules. A prince of a fellow was that Dr. Fedak!

The following day no one came to visit us, as there had been a lot of sporadic shooting in the streets by a Russian infantry regiment that broke into the wine shops and drank so much of the fiery spirits that their officers could not control them until the intoxication had passed. They were allowed to roam the streets and fire at will, injuring several persons in their drunken orgy.

I spent the day watching some of them who came within sight of my window and in studying the very remarkable case of a man who had been wounded in the head by machine-gun bullets. The two shots struck him so nearly simultaneously that they entered the self-same hole just between the eyes, passed through to the back of the skull, struck the heavy wall of bone at the base of the brain, rebounded a trifle and lodged in the cerebellum. The X-ray pictures showed them plainly in this position. While the bullets remained in the brain, the man was not able to use his arms; but as they sank he regained the use of his arms and later his fingers. He came to me this afternoon with paper and tobacco in his hands and asked me to roll his cigarette



for him. Then the following day, without any apparent change in his condition, he suddenly died.

There was another death at just the same time that revealed some surprising characteristics in him who had been my immediate neighbor. I had a small bed-table on his side of my cot and used to place on it some of the dainties which I managed to secure with the little money I still had. He would "die for" a bit of the raspberry jam which we had been able to ferret out of a secret little shop, if only I would give him a little. Then whenever the Red Cross visitors came around, he would moan and groan to attract their sympathy and drag something special from them. The doctor told me that he could not last but two or three days at most. As he finally passed out, they found he had under his pillow six hundred Austrian crowns, not one cent of which he had been willing to use so long as my funds lasted.

It was just at this time also that an Austrian major made his way into our ward and told me that he had a secret lodging in a cellar, where he would be glad to have me join him and plan with him an escape back into our lines. He promised to return the next night or so and work out with me the details of our move.

But that was too late, for the following morning brought the order that all of us who could be moved were to be immediately entrained for . . . Russia! We were going to the land of the Romanoffs, the land that had given so many great spirits for humanity, the land that knows no limits of

kindness, brutality and suffering! . . . To see the land that had been long ruled and oppressed by tyrants, where "Nothing is allowed, but everything is possible," . . . the land into which so many were to enter and from which so few were to return!



## CHAPTER VII

### TRAVEL AT THE TSAR'S EXPENSE

“**W**HO was it that caused the war?” My questioner was a charming young woman from the Russian Red Cross committee, who visited us as we entered the border town of Brody.

“All those,” I answered, “who have entered upon it; but chiefly those who could have prevented it but failed to do so.”

“Our Emperor,” she responded, “certainly did his best to keep peace.” Having another viewpoint to set forth which could have availed nothing, I did not answer her.

Among the committee were also two types of Tsarist officers whose views came out in their talks with me. One of them, a fine looking colonel, asked me frankly for my opinion of the Russian army and their conduct; also about the outlook on the field.

"Your frank question merits as frank an answer," I responded. "If you fight on the plains with your great preponderance of numbers, you have every chance of victory; but when you come into a mountainous or hilly country, your lack of strategy counts heavily against you. This has been markedly true in the past and will be proven so again in this war."

"Are the men well-behaved?"

"In general, yes. The Russian soldier is good-natured, though some of them display great cruelty on the battlefield toward the wounded and helpless and even go so far as to rob them."

The other officer was younger and more aggressive. He had been an eye-witness of the terrible destruction of General F——'s double division of cavalry and asked me:

"Have you any cavalry left, and when will you be entirely annihilated, anyhow?" My answer was brief.

"Maybe when you will have supreme command." It hit him like a bombshell. He sprang at my throat with his left hand and tried to draw his sword, but was stopped by one of his fellow officers. The colonel quietly said something to him which I could not understand, as the others dragged him away. He walked up and down the barracks, eyeing me angrily but not daring to make any further trouble.

Once we were on our way again, we passed two most pleasant days in a clean and comfortable sanitary train en route to Kieff. The ground was covered with snow and many were skating on the ponds. Everything seemed very peaceful and far removed

from any spirit of war. This was emphasized by an old station master who came to speak with some of us in our train. He asked me in German if it was really so terrible on the battlefield.

"You can imagine what it has been for me, who could never stand the sight of blood," I answered him.

"I am glad that they did not send me to the front in the railroad work," he added with deep feeling.

Another was so naïvely optimistic that he told me he was sure that none of the Russians had yet been killed.

When we arrived in the station at Kieff, they took us to the third-class waiting room and gave us such quantities of good, wholesome food that we could hardly credit what our eyes told us. Among the prisoners were a Rumanian and a Gypsy, who grabbed everything they could reach, piled their plates full and sat with their arms around their places like hungry animals that would defend their kill against other preying beasts. They ate until they could swallow no more and then—one of the Red Cross women brought in a delicious-looking pudding sprinkled with cinnamon. The two men actually cried when they saw it and realized they could eat no more!

These kind women who served us were social leaders who spoke French and German fluently and promised to do all they could to make us comfortable. I was just enjoying their kindly treatment and the cleanliness of the whole place, when a doc-

tor came in and examined our transportation cards. One glance at mine and he hastily separated me from my companions. His sharp orders landed me in a most miserable and dirty patrol wagon, like the worst of Black Marias, and sent me bumping for nearly an hour over the cobbled streets. I had not the least idea of my destination until they unlocked the door and led me into—the cholera barracks! The bony, ash-colored patients lay about on the damp stone floors, with evidently no medical attention being given them and in unimaginable sanitary conditions.

The place was so filthy and, I was certain, so contaminated that I could not find a spot on the floor where I dared to sit down. Consequently I edged my way into a corner, where the walls were least noisome, and propped myself up on my crutches to await a doctor or something, I knew not what.

The only individual representing a possible personnel was a German-speaking guard who kept his distance from all the miserable beings whom he was set to watch. I stood up the whole night and, fatigued beyond words, tried to approach him in the morning to ask why I was being treated in this enigmatical manner. He was constantly sniffing some disinfectant and waved me off every time I tried to get close to him. Finally I shouted after him:

“Why did they bring me to this place?”

“All cholera patients are confined here,” he answered.

“But I haven’t cholera,” I shouted back. “Look

at my card. I have a stomach wound." On my hospital card was recorded:

"Special care to be given to the stomach." The supervising doctor had misread it and catapulted me into the cholera pen. When they finally rectified the error, with the apologies of the staff doctor to the "Herr Professor" who had been forced to stand in the corner all night, they transferred me to a very clean and well-kept hospital that had been estab-



lished in what had previously been an old fortress with the ditch for a moat still surrounding it. As our rooms were arranged in such a way that I could see the wonderful frost-crystals on the frozen window near my bed, I begged a pencil and some paper of one of the nurses and began sketching the lacy intricacy of the marvelous patterns which Nature chose for her window decorations.

Visitors came daily but were not allowed to talk with us. One afternoon a general and some ladies

appeared as the representatives of the Pan-Slavic committee, bringing with them great bundles of cigarettes, chocolate and raisin-bread cookies.

"Are you Slavic?" they asked of every one. If the answer was affirmative, they gave a package of all the different articles they were distributing. If the sick prisoner happened not to be a Slav, he received only one or two cigarettes or even nothing at all, according to their momentary whim. Seeing this small-minded bigotry in this place of misery and suffering made my blood boil. As they found me talking with the nurse in Russian and as I spoke a little with them, they took it for granted that I was Slavic and gave me a full portion of all their wares. These I tossed over to an invalid German in the bed next to mine with the rejoinder to the solemn committee:

"Thank you, I am not Slavic." Looking at me with mingled amazement and contempt, they picked up their things and walked away. My fair nurse, a charming woman of standing in the society of the city, looked at me questioningly.

"Why did you do that?" she asked.

"Well, in the first place I am not Slavic and have no right to the liberal ration; and, secondly, this poor fellow needs them much more than I." Knowing so well our hospital ration of fish soup with cabbage and a small portion of black bread, she caught me up with:

"Don't jest! You know you need them just as much as he does." Then she added in a most tender and considerate way:



"What would you like to have me get for you? Do not be modest in your request, for I feel sure that I could find whatever you may wish to make you more comfortable here?" She seemed to have sensed my revulsion of feeling at having cigarettes and other things handed out to me, as though through the bars of a prison to a criminal, and was searching to find some way to counteract the feeling which the haughty committee had left with me. I answered her:

"I am very grateful to you, but I have everything that I need." She seemed to feel the sarcasm of my pose and yet did not resent it in the least and insisted that she would like to be allowed to do something to make my lot less trying. Struck by her insistent courtesy and friendliness, all offered in the most womanly manner, I made bold to say:

"There is one thing you could give me that I should dearly love to have, and that is just a few drops of that *Trois Fleurs* which you use. I know it well from my days in Paris. Will you, please?" She smiled, blushed slightly and walked quietly away.

I was feverish again that night and could not sleep, so sat propped up in my bed listening to the moaning of the sufferers in the long corridor-like room. Out of the riven darkness she came shortly back to my bedside, carrying a little vial. She made me lie down, lighted a cigarette and put it between my lips, placing her cool hand on my burning forehead. Then she sprinkled some of the contents of the precious bottle on my pillow and, drawing a little

charm on a gold chain from inside her dress, she put it around my neck, with the words:

“Keep up your courage. You have a proud spirit and will come through.” As she left me to go her rounds of the other cots in her half of the ward, I fell asleep and dreamed of a marvelously fair Snow Princess, surrounded by the snow-crystals from the window like so many shining diamonds. She was but one of the many fine Russian women who gave freely of their time to nurse us enemy wounded and who left a deep impression of great culture and kindness of feeling. Through all my later days in prison camps and far-away Siberian places she stood out as the one “Snow Princess” of my dreams and became the subject of a symbolical canvas which I executed in the Slavic genre and copied several times for sale at my different exhibitions.

The following morning I awoke refreshed by my sleep and in a more cheerful mood. Taking my crutches, I hobbled down one of the long corridors in an exploring mood. There at one side I discovered a young Russian officer leaning also on a crutch and talking with his mother in a most tender way. He smiled encouragingly at me and offered me a cigarette. We fell to talking. The little woman said:

“Oh, dear God! I am the most unfortunate mother on earth. One of my sons is in the German army; the oldest one, who married in Budapest, volunteered with your troops and this, my youngest boy, is with the Russian colors. With whom shall I sympathize?” My throat caught, and I could say

nothing, so I just smiled an adieu and hobbled away.

As I finished my visiting round, I went slowly back to my own bed, where I found my nurse packing my few belongings. Orders had been received to evacuate us to Petrograd. Just as I was beginning to improve, the necessity for going again into the transport wagons once more set my wounds back.

In the train the compartments were filled with Czechs, the pet prisoners of the Russians. None of them wounded, they occupied the heated part of the train, leaving the cold, damp cars to us wounded. They were arrogant and insulting. Feeling that they had been wrongly treated by the Austrian government, they were making good use of the favors which their treachery had bought them. As traveling companions they made our trip to Petrograd far from pleasant.

Once there, they continued to be a thorn in our flesh. In order to secure places in the best hospitals, they reported themselves as suffering from influenza, rheumatism and stomach troubles, while the seriously wounded among us had not only to content ourselves with the poorest accommodations in the corridors and inferior rooms but also had to put up with neglect and insults. They went into the kitchens and took the best food, letting us fare on what they chose to leave for us. Speaking Russian fluently, because of the close relationship with their own tongue, they slandered us with tales of cruelty and barbarism in our treatment of women and children.

We had no chance to defend ourselves against their virulent animosity.

But injustice cannot endure forever. On the second day among visiting generals and other prominent persons I recognized Count K——, who held some high position in the imperial household administration and who had been an intimate friend of my uncle, when he was connected with our embassy in St. Petersburg. I had met the Count while I was on a visit to my uncle. He recognized me immediately, took me by the arm and led me into the private room of the head doctor.

After hearing what we had gone through, he made an emphatic gesture and promised, with all the chivalry of which this type of Russian was master, to act promptly to see that our hospital conditions were corrected. Upon his intervention we were almost immediately transferred to a new, modern-equipped hospital under the personal patronage and supervision of the Tsarina.

That very first afternoon we were honored by a visit from Her Majesty. Suddenly all was bustle and stir in the room. Pairs of Cossacks took positions at the different entrances, while all the nurses ranged themselves stiffly against the walls. I could not but feel that now I should see in this imperial person something different, something above the ordinary human mortal. I recognize dignity and majesty wherever I see it and was prepared to accord to her my full respect. She entered, followed by a young Cossack officer and a doctor from the general

hospital staff, who kept near her all the time she was in the room.

But alas for my dreams of the unusual! She seemed ill at ease and far from impressive, both in appearance and action. For one brief second she became almost natural, when she made the initial movement of sitting down on the edge of one of the beds beside which she stood, but caught herself up in the error, straightened and assumed her far-from-easy manner. She spoke for several minutes to one of our colonels, while to the others she dropped just some phrase like:

"Oh, you will soon be better," or "God help you to recover rapidly."

As she had asked the colonel who the different ones in the near-by beds were, she heard what my profession was and stopped to say to me:

"I fear you will not find much inspiration here."

More anxiously awaited and appreciated were the daily visits of Count K——. He criticized our soup and was greatly surprised when I told him that this was the best food we had had in the country. He showed much interest in the sketches which I was beginning to make to bring my crippled hand back under control, criticizing them in a very sympathetic manner and giving me great encouragement. He was our only channel of communication with the outside world and one day informed us that soon several wounded officers would arrive from the 38th Infantry, of which the King of Spain was the Honorary Colonel. He told us that, through the special intervention of His Majesty, these offi-

cers, instead of being sent to Siberia, would be taken south to the genial climate of the Crimea. We all agreed that, after all, it is not bad to have a reigning sovereign as your Honorary Colonel to secure you a little of the graft of war.

One day he told me that he had a bit of personal news for me and suggested that I dress and come with him into the office. There he quietly informed me that he had secured permission for me to go with him to the studio of Makovsky, one of Russia's greatest living artists. I could hardly believe my ears and walked as one in a dream. In the low Russian sleigh we slipped along behind his *troika* of finely bred horses through a wide street that brought us soon into the once fashionable and famous boulevard of Russia, the Nevsky Prospect.

I felt the tremendous contrast between this and my former visit to the capital of the Tsars, when I was a guest in one of its embassies. Makovsky was much more gracious than I had any right to expect. We talked frankly with each other for a long time and then we—dined! First there were the numerous *zakouskas*, which one must go to Russia to know. Then there were wines, real wines! As it was during the early period of the war when prohibition had been declared for military reasons, they fell to discussing the subject. I ventured the remark:

"It is only the common people, I suppose, to whom wines are forbidden."

"Just the opposite," laughed Makovsky, "they need the dope. You should know what Trepoff ob-

served to the Tsar, when this question came up before. He asked: 'But what can we do with so many sober people?' . . . That was good, really Russian, wasn't it?"

When I came back to the hospital, my comrades insisted on having every last detail of the party related to them. Their first question was, naturally, about what we had had to eat. Then:

"What did you have to drink? . . . Were there any charming women there?" One added:

"You had better make the best of your acquaintance now, for when you get to Siberia, you will have nothing but memories to live on." This pessimism put a blanket on our enthusiasm and sent us to our beds with the thought that had constantly followed us all, again looming stark and threatening.

For me this possibility of exile to the frozen land seemed for a brief moment to be wiped away, when Count K—— came in the following morning and told me that Makovsky had secured a position as a decorative artist for me there in Petrograd, where I could work in peace and security. But the thought did not last long, as I somehow could not feel right in cutting myself loose from those others who had to go through with the game. I had started with them and did not like the idea of deserting them now, especially when it was to take up work under the patronage of my former enemies.

The next day we boarded the train under the personal supervision of the Count, who prevented a repetition of the affair with the Czechs. It was on

this trip back to Moscow that the soldiers in our car capitalized my occupation to secure them more of the cigarettes, chocolate and other supplies which the Red Cross representatives were distributing at the different stations. I was asleep the first time they thought of me as useful stock in trade and was dragged to the door to face a Red Cross delegation and confirm their statement:

"We have a professor here!" with which they had sought to secure some special indulgence. I had to play my part and talk French or German as the particular case demanded, so as to make a good forage for them.

In Moscow, for some unknown reason, they took us all about the town in special street-cars, giving us a wonderful opportunity to see the city of churches, before setting us down in front of a former girls' high school on the Novo-Basmanyi Pereudok, which had now been converted into a hospital. It was there in the heart of the old capital of Russia that I had a very delightful experience to mark the place for all time.

It was late in the afternoon. The twilight was stealing into the streets as the forerunner of the deeper shades that had already begun to bring lights to some of the darker interiors of the homes across the way. As I stood by the window, looking out on the snow-clad city, I noticed a charming young girl in the house directly opposite me, waving at some one. For a moment I tried to see who this some one was and then suddenly realized it must be myself. So I waved back to her. She seemed delighted and



pointed to the young companion who also stepped to the window with her.

The next day a pantomime conversation developed between us three. They first brought all the national flags of the Central Powers and caught my affirmative nod when they showed the Hungarian tri-color. Then they brought a map to the window and located my home in Budapest by the same system of guiding signals. Finally my profession was explained and everything else that we could think to say by signs. They danced up and down with delight.

Late in the evening, when every one was asleep, a soldier came to my bed and handed me a large package with a sweet, amusing letter, that could have been written only by so unsophisticated a young girl. The missive revealed her name as Nadia, the daughter of General Loleit. The other young girl was a visiting guest from Germany, Herta Gross. Nadia had been a student in the building we now occupied, and her class-room was that in which my cot was located. She had planned to make the acquaintance of the first prisoner who came to the window of her old class-room.

As we had arranged this clandestine exchange of letters by signs during the day, I gave the soldier-servant of the general an illustrated account of the way in which I had come to Moscow and also told them of my family. The next morning they waved me a delightful acknowledgment and sent the soldier over with just a short note, telling me to look at their window at noon and meet the members of

Nadia's family in return. First she brought Brother Paul, aged four, who waved with his plump little hands without knowing why or to whom he was waving. Then they enticed the general into coming to the window under the pretext of showing him something down in the street. The old gentleman did not seem to see anything there worth while, but was kept in the frame long enough for me to come to know him well.

In turn I brought my twenty-two fellow-prisoners to our windows, each smoking the cigar which Nadia had sent across to them and all saluting her by raising their hands three times. Just then the doctor came in and called in an angry voice to his patients grouped around the windows:

"What the devil are you loafers doing there when you ought to be flat on your backs?" He came over and looked out, as we scattered, but fortunately the girls had disappeared. "I'll ship you all to Siberia!" he added in a threat we feared he might easily make good, as our wounds were now rapidly healing.

It was in this same class-room of the delightful young neighbor over the way that I saw another of the vagaries of war which Fortune can play. In a bed near me was one of our wounded who had asked me one day if I did not recognize him. He was quite gray and had an empty eye-socket. With tears in his remaining eye he repeated the question, reminding me that he was a merchant of Budapest. When that gave me no clue, he finally had to tell me that he was the proprietor of the little haberdashery shop where I had bought my collars and

ties for some years. But he was only twenty-nine, and I could not believe that the old man before me was the same.

A stranger coincidence followed. From the neighboring room, into which some new arrivals had been brought, a Hungarian private came one day to visit us. Before he reached me, the merchant was at my side, saying:

"Watch and see if *he* will recognize me."

The man, on being questioned for whom he worked in Budapest, gave the merchant's name. Then the latter, asked further if he would recognize his old employer, if he should meet him now, answered that of course he would. "And you don't see any one here who looks like him?"

"No!" was his answer, as he looked straight at the white-haired man. Then he would hardly believe it, when the astounding revelation was made him. This merchant was the first person I had met among the prisoners whom I had known in civil life at home. It made me think:

"If war can change so much the mere facial expression of a man, how much more must it change the character of his life and soul?"

The class-room had other touching memories for those of us who occupied it. Late one evening, when the orderly was just going the rounds to turn down the lights, an attractive young woman, beautifully gowned and wearing a fur coat, suddenly entered, asked my name and sat down on the edge of my bed. Speaking fluent Hungarian, she said that she was exceedingly tired and could only stop to give

us a little bundle to be divided between us all. Then she handed me a package of three-rouble notes, containing just enough for each of us in the room to have one, and said she would come again in the morning.

The following day her husband came to our room under the pretext of being a money-changer. He took all the Hungarian small coins, worth only one or two cents, and gave for each a silver rouble. He did not even seem to stop to catch the look of gratitude mirrored in those set faces. We learned afterwards that he was an American and the husband of the woman who had come and gone so mysteriously the evening before. He told me that he had received word from Petrograd friends about me and had come to see that all was well with me. No one can go too far in praising the work of this wonderful couple among the prisoners and wounded. Later I heard from many others of their untiring efforts and liberality. I feel that this is a chance to voice to this unusual couple the gratitude of so many of the invalid soldiers, now living and dead. They not only gave of themselves but must have spent a fortune in doing their best to help and cheer so many unfortunates, downhearted and blue. From prisoners who passed through Moscow on their way to Siberia we later pieced together information regarding them, showing that during the worst of the Russian winter cold they worked from morn till night, visiting hospitals that were miles apart, mounting rickety stairs often guarded by brutal and

insolent soldiers and sometimes using basement windows as a means of entrance to reach the sufferers whom they had never before seen.

Too soon the threat of the doctor bore fruit. We were ordered to prepare for the journey to the land of snow and ice, the country of merciless cold—Siberia! With a last wave to my young acquaintances across the way, I joined the group that was marched off down the street between lines of police. The Moscow mob shouted and jeered at us as we passed, once or twice having to be charged by our guards. We wound our way for what seemed hours along dark streets and by-ways before we came to the miles of open country that lay between Moscow and the temporary barracks at the railway station.

It was there that we organized our first “family,” comprising a German actor-critic-writer, a Hungarian mining-engineer, an Austrian merchant and myself. During the trip we added “Joe,” a Hungarian peasant boy, who became my body-servant and stuck loyally to me through endless vicissitudes of fortune, sharing many an adventure.

In these barracks I also noticed an officer with the figures 28 on his buttons and immediately went to him, hoping that he might know something of my brother, who was a battalion commander in that regiment. The man proved to be a surgeon and not only told me that my brother was alive but that he himself had performed a trepanning operation on him and seen him come through it for a splendid

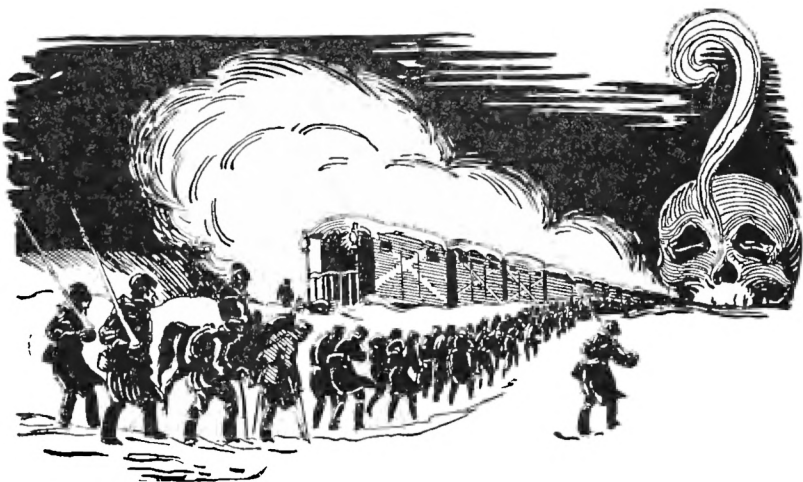
recovery. One can hardly imagine how grateful I was for this news just on the eve of going so far out of our known world.

Here came also the woman in black who had brought us money at the hospital. This time she had a whole caravan of small sleighs, filled with warm clothing and supplies. She asked me to help her distribute them among our prisoners and at the end remonstrated that I had kept nothing for myself. She laughed as I confessed that my size had defeated me, and immediately went to prepare a bundle that stood me in wonderful stead through the hardening cold.

More than all this, however, she told me that she had made a list of the prisoners she had met and had sent this out through Sweden, so that my family would be notified that I was among those taken prisoner but not on that other and more tragic list. Afterwards I learned that it was through this very channel that the first word reached my mother of my whereabouts, and not through the Red Cross. Also she gave me an address in Moscow, not in her own name, to which I could write and tell her how to send packages to me in my Siberian prison-camp.

It was about midnight as we started through a raging storm toward the train. The intermittent sheets of snow at times almost shut out the red lights on the rear. I could not help but think back to the great catastrophe which occurred in this very region a hundred years before, when the *Grande Armée*

of Napoleon was frozen on these wind-swept plains. As the engine was being prepared for our charge into the night, the smoke and steam rolled up and formed for a moment a great question mark against the dark sky. It was the symbol of our destination and our future.



## CHAPTER VIII

### TO THE LAND OF THE EXILES!

BY the following morning we were already far into the snow-covered plains of Central Russia. The country is divided into Governments, and we soon discovered that in each of these we were treated very differently. While passing through one we received our regular rations of food, whereas in the next it might be little or nothing. We fared particularly badly on the last day that we spent in each Government, as the officials counted on the next division meeting our needs and so let us go hungry. Throughout that Tsarist Russia graft was so shameless that it did not shrink from stooping to taking the food from prisoners to satisfy its greed.

Worst of all was Saratoff on the Volga, where we were transferred to a river steamer, following in



the wake of an ice-breaker that opened the channel for us. When we heard where we were going, we all looked forward to an enjoyable river journey under these unusual winter conditions; but we found ourselves badly disillusioned, when they herded us into the dark hold below decks and under the water line. They left us there with the scanty light of a single lamp and without food or water for a long period. The conditions were terrible, especially when several were taken sick from the rolling of the craft.

As the result of a council of war, it was decided that I should divert the guard, while the rest should devote their attention to an inspection of the bags and boxes which constituted the cargo on which we were lying. I carried through my rôle by taking out my sketch book and offering to make a drawing of the soldier. This necessitated his turning his face to the light and keeping it there while I worked. He was so delighted with the sketch that he gave me fifteen kopeks and, better still, left his post to go exhibit his picture on deck.

"Here, quickly!" and one of my companions passed me a handful of dates. Another drew out a huge smoked salmon. Each one opened a sack or case and unearthed plenty of tobacco, sugar and raisins besides the dates and fish. Some, after careful prying, found they had shoe-polish, beeswax or sulphur. Joe happened to strike a box of paraffin. All tried to eat their fill before the soldier returned.

The guard brought us not only the water for which we had begged but also what was much more than I could have expected—orders to conduct me to

the cabin of the captain, who gave me tea and *pi-roshki* with jam. In return he also received a sketch. One of the passengers was even more generous, as he gave me a whole silver rouble, the first one I ever earned. Business boomed, and I sketched until the paper which Count K—— had presented me was used up. My treasure amounted to seven roubles by the time we arrived at Samara.

Wishing to see something of the town but having only an unlined uniform coat, I put on all three of the sets of underwear with which the good lady in black had supplied me and sallied forth with a middle-aged Hungarian who happened to be the only other one similarly prepared. With my seven roubles burning a hole in my pocket, I could not resist the temptation offered by the warm and savory restaurant at the station. The bright lights, the white linen on the tables, the officers and pretty women dining and enjoying their Caucasian and Crimean wines were too much to resist, so that we put on a bold front and walked in among the tables toward the counter. In an instant a gendarme had the opposite door open and was ordering us out.

Hesitating stubbornly, I looked around at the Russian officers, challenging as it were, their chivalry which I had come to rely upon from my previous experiences. Nor was I mistaken. Before the gendarme could move me, one of them stepped forward and reprimanded him sharply for leaving his post and ordered him out. As he nodded a permission to us to make ourselves at home, we bowed our acknowledgment of his courtesy and sat down. We

glowed with the thought of a regular dinner, for "who knows when the next one will be?" So we ordered every thing on the table d'hôte menu.

I was sure it would cost all my suddenly acquired fortune. We had first a good *zakouska*, then an enormous helping of *borsch* with the lumps of meat in it, fish, cutlets with potatoes, *piroshki* with jam and a big pot of tea. As we went to the counter to pay, I had two three-rouble bills and one silver rouble. I put forward one of the former, wondering what effect it would have. To my surprise the cashier gave me back two roubles and forty kopeks. We had paid thirty kopeks (fifteen cents) apiece! I never did know whether this was some special rate for traveling prisoners of war or whether that restaurant regularly dispensed such banquets for a song, nor did I stop to make any investigation. We only ran for our train, that was soon rolling us eastward toward the Ural Mountains and the heart of Siberia—if it had any!

As we dropped off at some of the stations east of the Urals, groups of Tartars and Ostiaks gave a new character to the country, gazing at us with no show of either love or hate. When we arrived at Novo-Nikolaievsk, we were gladdened by the news that we were to be located there, because we were surprised to find so modern looking a city with electric lights, well-built houses and many trees. Then an officer came along and robbed us of our hope by telling us that only the Slavic prisoners were to be taken off there, while the rest of us were to go on to Achinsk.

This town, the northernmost point on the Trans-Siberian railway, we reached two days later, disheartened by our first look at it. What kind of a place was it they had considered as suitable for us? Let us see.

On our two-hour march to the prison camp we passed through the broad streets that indicate the cattle-raising character of the country around these Siberian towns. In the center was the wide circular *place* with the great cathedral in the middle of the town and the market-place just beyond. We were struck with the character of the shops and the fine display of merchandise in their windows.

Our barracks we found to be of stone, well built and containing large rooms with double-decker bunks, without mattresses or bedding of any kind. Such a minor detail as blankets was not even thought of—by the authorities, at least. These large rooms were light and airy, but for our family they assigned a smaller one which happened to be just next that of the *starshi*, or old Russian soldier in charge of the separate building. Now his quarters and our room were heated by the same “Russian stove,” which was built one-quarter on his side of the wall and three-quarters on ours. In our room there was a double window with a small ventilating pane near the top. The result of this unequal distribution of the mutual heating plant was that, when he was only tolerably warm in his room, we had to stand the atmosphere of a bake-shop. We thought we were coming to Siberia to be frozen, only to find it was to be roasted instead. Two or three times during the night we had

to get up, open everything and fan the hot air out with our coats through the ventilating window and the door. Finally we decided to give the Russian soldier, who made the fire, five kopeks per day to run less pressure on his gauge; and for this same five kopeks we received an extra allowance of oil that enabled us to burn our lamp after nine o'clock over the chess games which were our standard amusement.

Next to our accommodations our food took rank in the monotony of our days. We received exactly the same rations as the Russian soldier, except in the quality of the bread. In the morning we had tea without sugar and a liberal quantity of heavy black bread, which was very different from the dark brown rye loaf which ordinarily passes in Russia under the name of "black bread." At noon the menu was a soup with lumps of the meat and potatoes in it and *kasha*, or whole buckwheat boiled with lumps of suet through it. I tried in every way to flavor it, with sugar or otherwise, but could never sufficiently disguise it to get it down. At night it was again soup but without any *kasha*. And this was the regular ration of the Russian soldier three hundred sixty-five days in the year, save that he received also three lumps of sugar. For the first few weeks we had one and a half lumps per day.

Our supply of the black bread was, however, so liberal that we traded in it at the end of each week with a peasant who worked about the buildings. He paid us twenty-five kopeks for our weekly excess and thus furnished us funds to buy tobacco for the "family."

But fortuitously we made much more out of our extra bread than that. One day I modeled a bit of it to represent King Peter of Serbia, touching up the eyes and mustache with a bit of color that I managed to find. One day a Hungarian prisoner, who had been allowed to take up his profession of barber in the camp, came in to solicit my trade and offered to shave me and cut my hair free, because of our national kinship. I refused and elected to go on with my own tonsorial efforts as best I could.

Then he spied the little bust and was immediately determined to have it. He offered to shave me and cut my hair for a month, if I would give it to him. We found afterwards that he was exhibiting it all over in the town. Later, more important to us, he began bringing in orders, and I modeled some thirty Peters, Tsar Nicholases and Franz Josefs which sold at twenty-five kopeks apiece and furnished us with ready funds for many a luxury.

All the men in the prison camp who had the professions of barber, shoe-maker, tailor and carpenter immediately secured work. My services as modeler won me very quickly another job quite foreign to anything I had previously attempted. The shoe-maker had orders to make shoes with French heels for the wives of the colonels and the other Russian officers and employed me to cut out the heels for him. For several weeks this task brought me in fifty kopeks per day, a sum not to be laughed at in a place where five kopeks bought a pound of butter, ten bought five bottles of milk and four secured a pound of any cut of any kind of meat. Chickens

were ten kopeks a piece and sausages six kopeks per pound.

At the end of two weeks I had accumulated so much wealth that two of us decided to go into the town to buy supplies for the family. At that time we were in half-finished barracks with no yard wall around them to prevent us from getting away. There was only the guard.

*"Vstavia! (Stop!)"* was his greeting to us. *"Zapiska! (Permit!)"* We had none. But just then another prisoner, who had been longer in camp, came up and showed the guard a typewritten paper, saying that it was a pass for us two as well as for himself.

*"Ladno! (All right!)"* and all three of us were allowed to go. But the pass for three? The old-timer had already learned the illiteracy of the guard and the fact that any typewritten paper served as well as any other for this purpose.

In the town, a little more than two miles east of the camp, we found the shops full of merchandise for prices that seemed incredible. Many of the things cost less than in the places where they were made. German gramophone records, for instance, sold for twelve kopeks. Shoes were marked two roubles. Then there were ladies' gowns from Paris, London and Germany, of undoubtedly good quality but of vintages that would have given them great value, if they only had been château wines. Long trains, leg-of-mutton sleeves and exaggerated waists hung side by side in gowns that sold for four and five roubles. The holiday parades we afterwards saw were mar-

velously humorous epitomes of the styles of the past few decades.

That afternoon I bought a set of water-colors and the best English paper for one rouble, whereas it would have cost me at least four in Budapest. I also carried back five grayish-amber agate eggs from Tula, for which I gave ten kopeks *in toto*. Then we had coffee, a piece of cheese, raisins, rice, cinnamon sticks and delicious white bread for my shoe-maker work and my modeling. As my bag was being filled in the grocery-store, the proprietor put a package of cigars on the top as a present for me. My protest that I did not know how I could accept it brought out an interesting comment from a Russian villager standing near.

"Isn't that wonderful the way he speaks our language after having been here only a few days? I would not learn a foreign tongue if I lived to be a hundred." The man with whom he was talking turned to me and spoke in French. Handing me his address, written on a bit of paper, he invited me to visit him that evening and bring along some of the others with me. To bind the bargain he offered me a drink of schnaps. In those prohibition days all the bottles of wine and liquor in the shop were locked behind glass doors that were officially sealed by the authorities with a large display of tri-colored ribbons. But evidently the back of the cabinet was not so heavily guarded, for there was always a plentiful supply of the cheering beverages under the counter.

The day had been mild, so that we turned back toward the camp in the late afternoon, giving little



heed to the sharp gusts of wind that sprang up as we trudged along, warmed by our adventures in the town. Two or three peasants who passed us pointed at my face in an incomprehensible way and made gestures which I did not understand. Finally one stopped me and pantomimed until I caught his idea and took some snow to rub my nose. Then I realized that my nose was frozen and dived into a small shop by the roadside. But they only pushed me out and



insisted on more snow. It was the first seal of the Siberian winter which the North placed upon us. In spite of it we were back in barracks in time for the evening muster and out of them again later, bound for the house of our new acquaintance.

Slipping out by a back way, we avoided the necessity of another interview with the guard and threaded our path by a devious route to the address we had been given. My actor friend was a great coward, as later came out on several occasions, but his curiosity was greater than his cowardice and made him my companion on this evening escapade.

Our first impression of the stately, serious-looking Russians was almost staggering. They were about a dozen in the rooms where we arrived and all were well on toward intoxication. The big men with their bearded faces acted like so many children, particularly the host, who put his arms around me, kissed me and introduced me to the company in a way calculated to throw up in high relief his magnanimity and generosity.

"Look at this fine fellow! Does he look like our enemy? He would not hurt any one, and yet we nearly killed him." Then he cursed the Tsar and all the Tsar's régime. I protested, against such utterances in the presence of the under-officers who were in the room; but he assured me that "all were friends" there and that I had nothing to fear. I was also among those who would help me in case we fell into any kind of trouble.

"And you are always welcome here. There is vodka waiting for you and as much as you can drink." Already he and the others had been proving this by taking the fiery liquid in regular water tumblers and by trying to force it upon us in the same unwarranted measure. I could take but little and protested to him that it was not vodka in which I was interested but the lives and experiences of the people of the town—their stories and how they happened to be in this far-away place.

In response to this a sad-looking little Jew, speaking in fair German, informed me that he was a fur merchant and assured me that he would bring together a company, of friends who would have inter-

esting stories to pass my time. To this a very polite Russian among the guests, who scrutinized and watched us with his small, keen eyes, added his invitation.

It was well on toward midnight when we left. As it was strictly forbidden civilians to be on the streets after nine o'clock, we crept along in the intense cold from shadow to shadow, watching for the patrol and working our way slowly between the scattered, dark houses, occupied by the victims of so many untold miseries—for most of the inhabitants of Achinsk were exiles like ourselves, but for a multitude of reasons other than fighting against the Tsar.

"*Vstavai!* (Stop!)" shouted a harsh voice, as we almost bumped into two long bayonets. A pair of husky soldiers held them close to our chests. We naturally thought we had run foul of the patrol but, when they demanded our money and watches, we realized we were facing common robbers, which was somehow better than as though they had the law on their side. Matters lay in our own hands, at least.

In a flash I struck his bayonet down, jumped to his side and jammed my thumbs into his eyes—an apache trick which I had once seen worked with astonishing success in Paris. It proved equally useful here. Before he could pin my wrists, I hit him a heavy blow on the nose and rolled him over, grabbing his rifle as he fell.

Then I rushed the other with my rifle at the charge, broke through his guard and bowled him also. Minus their arms those husky masses were but helpless children, crying:

“*Pan! Pan! Nichevo! Nie trosaitye!* (Mister! mister! Let be! Don’t hurt me!)” Emptying the chambers of the rifles, we threw them in the snow some distance along, as we hurried away, glad to be so well out of our first hold-up on a Siberian highway. In the morning, however, there was an official investigation by some of the soldiers, to find out who had been out of the barracks the previous evening. Our *starshi*, in his own interest, assured them that none of his men were abroad. And so the highway-men had no official recourse against us.

Our first few weeks tended to acclimate us rapidly to the Siberian climate and to acquaint us with the country’s possibilities for adventure. With it all we were daily becoming more deeply interested in the land and its people.



## CHAPTER IX

### STRANGE TALES OF A STRANGE PEOPLE

ON the afternoon of our next gathering, we took the precaution to go out in a company of prisoners, with a few Russian soldiers added as helpers and guides, that was being sent to bring in firewood from the military store some three miles away on the other side of the town. Each man was to carry back two sticks about three feet long.

We were assembled in the barracks yard in column of fours. Two of the *starshi* began counting us, one from the head of the column and the other from the foot.

"Fifty-nine," shouted the first to complete his count.

"Seventy-two," was the other's positive finding. Then, when they had finished their swearing, each about his own accuracy, they started over again, counting together this time from the head of the column. Meanwhile, two more prisoners had quietly slipped out of the barracks and joined the company.

"Sixty-three," proclaimed the first one.

"No, sixty-seven, by the Lord! Can't you see?" Once more they adjusted their differences and commenced a third time to score. This time they both found sixty-six as the magic number and were very proud of the conjunction of ideas. In reality there were seventy-five; but how can you expect a Siberian *starshi* to indulge in such high mathematics without his abacus?

Just at this time a ukase had come from the Tsar's hand, proclaiming that the nation was at war with the German army but not with the German people and declaring that Russians must stand together to protect their civilization. Let us see some of this civilization which Russians were called upon to protect!

At a street corner in the town we slipped quietly out of the column and walked boldly away, looking neither to the right nor to the left. With the column out of sight, we sought out the house of the Russian friend who had invited us for the *soirée*. After an initial round of vodka, our host of the previous evening was the first to recount his experiences.

His story was just a typical tale of the fate that overcame so many under the old Russian régime. He had been a jeweler in Moscow, whose success had aroused the greed of some of his competitors. These bribed the police to remove him from their field of economic strife.

"Yes," he went on blandly, "one night—well toward midnight—the police forced an entry into

my house for an official search. In fact, the police always come at midnight, to be sure of finding their victims at home. They discovered nothing incriminating, but just the same they arrested me and notified me the next morning that 'for administrative purposes' I was to leave in twenty-four hours for Siberia. The man who had been the informer against me bought all my stock, while I was herded into a transport train and landed here. . . .

"But that fellow can tell you lots of things about such matters." He pointed to a man with a badly scarred face and most ugly expression, sitting in the corner of the room and looking out as though he were spying on the company.

"He was police-dog for those scoundrels. He did all their dirty tricks for them. . . . Here, Gregory, tell your tale!"

The former police official was an unscrupulous, crafty brute with a shameless sincerity, which was typically Russian. His story was, consequently, amazingly frank.

"Yes, we arrested people by the thousands and sent them to populate Siberia. . . . Yes, they screamed and whined, but they all went just the same."

"But how, by what right? How did you feel when forced to carry out such heartless orders?" I asked with disgust.

"What else could I do? Sometimes the police received an order from higher authorities to vacate a certain block in the city, to arrest a certain number of people for transport to a certain place in Siberia.

Sometimes the orders did not specify any one class or kind of people; sometimes they said all the Germans, all the Jews or all the radicals. . . . It was good business generally, for we all got something out of the confiscated property. But the person who got the real benefit was always some one higher up. He took the cream, especially from the others who came in and occupied the vacated properties. . . . We cooked up evidence against those we wanted to move. So what could they do? If some one appealed, it went all the worse for him. He got jail instead of exile. So they learned to obey. The Russians were accustomed to obey, especially if they saw the Tsar's name on the ukase.

"After they landed in one of the Siberian places of exile, they were comparatively free, save that they could not leave it without a passport. This they could get without trouble, if they owned property in the town, which the officials looked upon as a bond for their return."

As he stopped and sank back into himself, I asked him how he happened to have to take a dose of his own medicine.

"Oh, I executed an order for a superior, which got him into trouble. He forgot all I had ever done for him and put the whole thing on me. Some one had to pay, and I was the scapegoat."

The next one to tell the reason for her presence in this distant colony was a woman whose quiet costume and jet black eyes, set in a pallid face, offered little to attract one's notice. But when she spoke, all was changed. Her rich voice, gentle manner and re-



fined diction at once marked her as a person of high breeding and culture. She was the wife of a city magistrate in Moscow living in the *Yekaterininskaya Ulitsa* in her previous normal existence. During one of those frequent riotous upheavals of workers and students her only son, a little boy not yet five years old, was playing on an open balcony of the third floor and dropped one of his toys to the street, hitting a wild Cossack from the Urals on the head.



The beast in his fury ran into the house, followed by some of his companions, and killed the innocent child, wounded his half-crazed mother and, after smashing the expensive furniture, left the place swearing and cursing. Neither the father's position nor his rank could succeed in bringing this murderer to trial, as the Cossacks were a privileged class over whom no ordinary civil court had jurisdiction. Finally the two disconsolate parents were exiled for stirring up controversy between the civil authority and the troops of His Majesty. The father died

shortly after they arrived at the place of exile and left her to face Siberia for the rest of her life alone.

With these and other similar experiences running through our heads, my actor friend was terribly agitated over it all, as we threaded our way back to the barracks that night, and was for hanging all the Russians who had ever held an official post. After these recitals I was prepared to hear and believe anything about this land and life into which we had been catapulted. With these impressions so vivid, we did not look forward with as much keenness to the second of the invitations that was to take us to the house of the Jewish fur-merchant the following evening.

We were surprised by the contrasting character of the first recital there and felt that our knowledge of Siberia had still to be rounded out. The two daughters of our host, with their husbands, had just returned from a trip to Italy.

"How did you like it there in Italy, with the beautiful climate and the great number of historic places?" I asked.

"Oh it was nice, but we were frightened, when the war broke out, that we should not be able to come back home," they answered to my surprise.

"Would it have been such a tragedy, if you had been compelled to remain there in the sunshine instead of shivering in this terribly cold place?" I asked with a touch of irony.

"But we were born here. We are used to it, and all that we possess is here."

The host's son was studying medicine in the Uni-

versity of Omsk, being in residence there on the false papers of an ignorant Russian. As the university's regulations permitted only one per cent of the total number of students to be Jews, this boy and many others registered under false papers, though they never could practice their professions on the same documents. The government examining boards were too strict to be duped so easily.

A neglected-looking and half-bewildered individual entered while we were talking, a typical poor relative of a rich Jewish merchant. My interest was instantly aroused when I heard that the man was the survivor of a merciless pogrom. Once during a previous visit to Russia, I had tried to learn something about the pogroms from a little knot of Jews at a railway station who were being exiled to Siberia. I was checked, however, by the police, with the warning that, if I persisted, I should be compelled to leave the country at once. Having always been shocked by the heinousness of the wholesale exiles, I felt my blood rise as I listened to one who had gone through the midst of one of these awful experiences of merciless persecution.

"But who organized such a pogrom?" was my first question to the cowed relative.

"The military governor himself."

"Why couldn't you defend yourselves against your attackers?" I asked, knowing from my own experience in the front line that the Russian is far from brave in the face of determined resistance such as men fighting for their lives and their families should show.

"What could we do? No Jew was allowed to have any weapons. Every one would be killed in a house where a government agent could find a pistol," was the sad man's answer.

"Tell me the way the pogroms usually start. Are the Jews warned of the approaching danger?"

"Of course they are," the man moaned. "The governor's agents come to the villages with a plentiful supply of free vodka. When they get the ignorant peasant drunk, they tell them all sorts of false tales, such as that the Jews pollute their drinking water, take Christian blood for their religious rites, conspire against the Tsar and do other similar fanatical things. It sometimes requires three or four days for the agitation and the vodka to take effect.

"In the final hours we hear in our deadly fear and agony the roaring battle songs of the drunken peasants as a sign that the final act of our tragedy is at hand."

"What then?" I asked, almost afraid of the answer as he hesitated a moment. He stretched out his hand to the full length of his arm, as though he would ward off the monstrous horror.

"The devils break loose. Armed with hatchets, long knives and shot-guns, they are off for the butchery. In our pogrom they came on us like furious beasts, tore down our weak barricades, falling over one another in their wild rush. They killed our old and young indiscriminately and, in their blind fury, often felled their own members. This was only the worse for us, because in the end they said it was the Jews who killed them. Then they dragged our women away. . . ." He broke down and shook with

sobs of deep emotion. As we all sat shocked into absolute silence by the poignancy of his feelings, he looked up and, in a very low, even tone, finished his story.

"They mistreated our women in masses . . . often under-aged young children . . . killing some of them. . . . Then they burned our houses . . . and it was finished." Finally I asked:

"Had you no friends among the villagers who would defend you? Could you not escape, when you knew what was going to happen?"

"There are always good people in the villages who would offer us shelter, but they are warned in advance not to do so, on pain of sharing our fate. As soon as the trouble starts, all the roads leading to the place are closed and guarded by the gendarmes. Nobody can enter or leave. Just the same there have been people who took the tremendous chance and hid some of their Jewish friends—but they are few, very few."

The discussion which followed this broken man's tale brought out the fact that there were only four or five of the governors who use the pogrom to settle their Jewish question. The rest have no Jewish problem to contend with, or, on principle, protest vigorously against these barbarous wholesale murderings. This information was corroborated in later years by what I heard from general sources and from other participants on both sides.

Those two evenings with their weird and depressing stories were only the first of many in which I shared. Just at this time there came another element of outside interest into our lives. We had found a

single battalion of Russian troops at the great barracks on our arrival. Now two additional regiments of recruits with their regular and reserve officers came to be trained for service at the front. At this early period of the war we were fortunate in having mostly university students as the reserve officers that came for training, many of whom became most friendly with our family.

One of these young students invited me frequently to his room and kept me there for long talks on all sorts of subjects. I was glad to have the time with him but finally became a bit suspicious of his constant insistence that I spend long hours with him. On being pressed, he admitted to me that he had been sentenced to thirty days in barracks by his colonel for a bit of a mishap on the train.

"What did you do?" I asked, merely out of courtesy.

"Well," he answered, "I had drunk too much and pushed the conductor off the car. The stupid lummoX slipped under the wheels and was killed, so I got thirty days in barracks for it."

Thirty days for the life of a train-conductor! That reveals something of the power and position of the military in the Russia of that day.

On another occasion I was at an afternoon tea in the quarters of a young officer, who was a law student. There were several young women present, conducting themselves in a way that, if I had not been in Siberian surroundings, would have seemed to me quite uncompromisingly shameless. There was especially one extremely attractive young woman who was fondling and being fondled by a heavy-

looking, spiritless type of officer who seemed to have little to commend him to one of these vivacious creatures of the Russian military world.

A little later a young officer from the recently arrived guards regiment pushed his way into the room with a whip in his hand. Without a word of warning he cut the woman over the head and shoulders. She jumped and tried to get away, but stumbled over a piece of furniture. He lashed her with all his might until she was covered with blood and lost consciousness. Finally one of the other girls took her away.

Meantime the rest of the company merely looked on in dumb amazement, without any one, not even the man with whom she had been coquetting, lifting a hand to help her. Her paramour muttered something in a cowardly way, but the man with the whip simply pushed him aside. Only the host remarked:

"This is not good, Ivan Nikolaoevich."

"Not good?" the man questioned gruffly. "The dirty hussy told me she was going to the dentist's, but I thought that I would find her here with you," he jeered, pointing to the stolid officer. Later the slight disturbance in the atmosphere passed off and the two men were talking together as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

Among the perverted customs of the Russians this was about the ugliest—a husband doesn't punish another man for robbing him of his wife, but it is always the woman who has to take the blows. And her low cavalier in this case never moved a finger to save her from them.

Many evenings slipped quickly away in these

recitations of the weird side of Siberian life and these manifestations of the Russian character. Soon I received also an order from the chief engineer of this division of the railway to paint a portrait of him. When it was done, he invited me to a *soirée* in celebration of the unveiling. As I was asked to come at four, I appeared promptly on the hour to find that my host was not home and that the servant knew nothing of the company of "fourteen or fifteen friends" whom the engineer told me he had invited to be present. I sat down and waited. At about five two other guests came in but did not seem at all disturbed, as I had been, by the absence of so unimportant a person as the host. They simply went into an adjoining room and lay down on a bed to sleep away the interval of waiting.

Finally the master of the house appeared and, without the least apology or even reference to his delay, gave us a hearty welcome and a rich reward for waiting in the spread he set before us. During the meal my host turned to me and asked a frank expression of what I found in Russia that struck me most unfavorably. I could not help but answer, after the revolting story of the Jew, that from what I had previously read and just now heard I felt the pogroms were the most barbaric, uncivilized and unbelievable thing not only in Russia but in all the world.

"I do not approve of them at all," he answered. "They are the work of stupid generals. Yet I do believe in a strict control of the Jews. Just look at the list of the criminals. Who are engaged in smug-



gling, spying, white slave traffic? All the gangsters, dive-keepers and gamblers of the big cities come from their ranks."

I protested that the Jews as a people are highly educated and talented above the average in every walk of life.

"Maybe they are talented, but they have no character; and without this nothing of value can come out of a people." Later he added "All the big criminals are Jews."

"That's not true," came very definitely and unexpectedly from a woman of from thirty-five to forty, "*my husband* was not a Jew. . . ."

"That's an old story, Maria Petrovna," broke in our host petulantly in an attempt to silence her and evidently anxious not to have the character of his guests lowered in my eyes, "don't try to tell that again."

But his attitude only sharpened my curiosity and made me insist on her giving it to me. As she began, our host and the others withdrew and left us together on the divan, the engineer remarking as he left the room:

"Oh, that's an exceptional case. Don't take it as generally representative." And this is what she told me.

"My husband was a member of a fine old family and, as the manager of a gambling club, came into contact with the richest and most prominent people in St. Petersburg. Yes, he was noble and rich, and I felt quite honored when he asked me, a poor chorus girl, to marry him. Our marriage ceremony

was the funniest I ever heard of, celebrated in the company of a few queer-looking fellows, who disappeared shortly after it was over and left us alone in our luxurious quarters. My husband also disappeared that same evening and did not return until four or five days later.

"When he came in, his clothes, especially his shirt, were covered with blood, but he himself was unhurt. Oh, I could tell lots about the agony and fear that haunted me in my lonely home, as those incidents repeated themselves from time to time."

"Did you ever try to ask him about what had happened?" I interpolated, as she hesitated a bit.

"No, I did not dare to, and he was so kind. He constantly brought me jewels worth a whole fortune. . . . But one day I could not stand it any longer. I followed him in a troika to the Nevsky Prospect and into a sidestreet in a fashionable residence district. But he was not alone. A few suspicious figures joined him as he stepped out of the sleigh. They entered the gates of a big, lonely looking house, where they whispered together for a second, then one went to the door and rang while the rest flattened themselves against the side of the house.

"Meantime, I had taken refuge in the shadow of a gate on the opposite side of the street, waiting breathlessly to see what would happen. After long seconds I heard shots, became frightened and ran back to my troika. I drove swiftly to police headquarters to see a former friend in the department, who promised to follow the thing immediately. Distraught but somehow relieved, I went back home.

"There my old woman servant asked me in very disrespectful tones why I should be spying upon my husband. 'It won't bring you any good, I can tell you that.'

"My husband came in shortly and, to my horror, I saw that he had blood on his shirt-front. Saying to him 'Oh dear! I am so afraid that something will happen to you,' I started to remove the spots without further word or question. He only laughed and said:

" '*Galupshchik*, you are wonderful! One day you will not regret it.' He was so kind that I almost forgot what I had seen and was sorry for having gone to the police. We were just ready to retire, when a suspicious noise on the main floor made me shiver. My husband jumped with a drawn pistol in his hand; but, as he stepped out into the dark corridor, a terrific blow sent him down. He was handcuffed, while a dozen police came streaming into the apartment. . . ." Then she added remorsefully:

"Yes, the Obolensky murder was one of the most sensational crimes of St. Petersburg and left me a penniless, exiled nervous wreck."

In addition to these few that I have recounted, I was burdened and depressed with many other stories that were more weird and not fit to be repeated. There was among these one, however, that raised such a question in my mind as to the sanity of the Russian soul that I am induced to add it for its psychological value.

In the barracks at Achinsk I met a couple, of whom the husband was a talented architect, an honors graduate of the university. He and his

former-actress wife lived a quiet, harmonious life. Both were most agreeable and charming. They had a friend, a young unsophisticated boy who was employed in one of the government bureaus in the city. They stood out in the colony as being the only ones I met there who did not drink at all. With an architect friend among the prisoners I was frequently at their home and passed many pleasant happy hours with them.

One morning I met my prisoner friend in a great state of agitation.

"What do you think has happened? . . ." and he went on to tell me the incredible news that our young friend and his companion in the town had both committed suicide. He asked me to come along to the poor wife to see if we could help her in any way and, as we went, he told me the story. They had been members of a suicide club in Petrograd and had received word that their names had been drawn as the next two to go. So the architect had hung himself, and the young friend in town, evidently hesitating to commit the act of taking his life, was smothered in his pillows by the two messengers who came from Petrograd to see that they fulfilled their vows.

After this experience I cut off all my connections with the Russian colony and spent my time among my prisoner friends. Even if they were depressed by their state and their surroundings, they had still within them something sane that guarded them from the morbid view of life which I had found in the bared Russian soul.



## CHAPTER X

### THE GOLD MINES OF THE TSAR

JUST as we were shaking down into a more or less regular life in the barracks and were beginning to provide ourselves with some of the possible comforts of life in these surroundings, there came a sweeping change in the regulations, which spelled disaster to our growing comforts. First, with the arrival of hordes of new recruits, the supplies of food began to run so short that our regular rations were cut to just half. At noon we had no *kasha* and at night no soup, only *kasha*. The ration of bread was also reduced in a similar manner.

Then—and more trying for us—the freedom of movement we had enjoyed was curtailed by the new order that none of the prisoners were to be allowed to leave the barracks. This prevented us from securing the food and other supplies which were doing so much to alleviate our stern conditions of life.

Strangely enough, in the midst of this upheaval, there was one class among the prisoners who did not suffer much in a material way. These were the officers. The Russian government paid each officer-prisoner fifty roubles a month and allowed them to organize their own mess. Incredible as it may seem, they were able to have the best of food at only twelve roubles per month for themselves and their kitchen staff. On this they lived like princes. Their only other necessary expenses were the one rouble per month they contributed to the general fund for the private soldiers and one rouble for the information service which we maintained. A small contribution of fifty kopeks apiece, or something comparable with this, went to make up the very handsome salary of the cook, who in his civil life was a chef at one of our largest hotels. In our own family we had a talented pastry-cook to draw upon.

From their liberal pay the officers began purchasing fur and leather coats, strong boots and all kinds of equipment, while some of them put part of their savings into the ridiculously cheap raw furs. I myself collected some of these most attractive skins and look back now with amusement at my purchase of ermines. I was told I could get them for five kopeks apiece but found the market had risen—to seven! At this price I purchased about forty. Red foxes I bought at seventy-five kopeks and blue ones at one rouble twenty.

During these days of February there was also maturing the matter of my promotion to officer's rank, which had been given me the night of my map-

drawing experience in the farm house. When my name appeared among the killed, it was in the officer's list, so that now it was but a matter of passing the fact through diplomatic channels to the Russian authorities and thus securing for me the monthly pay and the transfer to the officers' barracks.

However, I was making more than fifty roubles a month by this time and was not anxious to have my freedom of action curtailed. Conditions in the camp began to pall upon me. I did not like either the comparative luxury of the officers or the hardships of the common soldiers. No more did I find it possible to hear the continuous gossiping and bragging that filled the hours. I had to do something to keep my mind and hands occupied.

Then, too, I received the stupendous sum of one hundred roubles from my people at home. The prison authorities did not want to give it to me and strongly urged me to let them issue it in weekly installments of two roubles. When I insisted on having it, they asked me what I intended doing with so much money at once.

It was during this same month that I began to hear once more from that outside world which I had known after being captured. I received a letter from Nadia Loleit, saying that a great disaster had fallen upon Herta Gross, in that she had been forced, by reason of her German nationality, and in spite of all the influence of General Loleit, to go to Siberia for internment. They had received one letter, giving her address, but had been unable to get further word from her. I also had a card from Herta and became

the channel through which the two friends were once more put in touch, as each could write to me and I could forward their letters.

Then came the second message that brought joy to my heart. A Russian soldier appeared one day in the barracks and inquired for me. When he was brought in, he asked most searching questions. Was my name Imrey? Was I an artist?

"Let me see your hand," he finally said, and felt the center of the palm. He confessed he was looking for the scars of the pieces of shrapnel. Then, evidently satisfied with his examination, he said:

"Come along. I have something for you in the town." It turned out that this mysterious-acting individual was an invalid who had been sent from Moscow to convalesce in Achinsk and was now living near the station. In his room he showed me a great parcel, three or four feet long and two or three wide, which he had been keeping there until he could properly identify me. It was from the lady in black, who sent me a letter containing twenty roubles with the wonderful package and signed herself with her name spelled backward.

It was the most wonderful Christmas package I had ever received, and I hurried off with it in a droshky to camp to share the thrill with my family. When I called them, they came tumbling out and began dancing about and shouting commands and hurrahs that made bedlam of the place for the moment. Then they took it upon themselves to open the package for me and were so eager that I could hardly get near it myself.



"Cheeses, a whole line of them! . . . Chocolate!" Then we dug out four rashers of bacon, sugar, tobacco and cigarettes. My own heart gladdened most as I discovered a fine new sketch-book and writing-paper, as my supplies were exhausted. There were also tins of pineapple, salmon and everything one could dream of for a prisoner's needs.

That night we set forth a great spread, to which we invited all our intimates. It was marvelous the way such generosity and lavishness changed the mental tone of the men. Every one vied in telling of the days at home when such things were matters of everyday life. We feasted and blessed the name of our good angel in Moscow.

With all this wealth in hand and with the fillip in spirits which the renewed touch with the outside world brought me, I was in a mood to cut myself loose from the stagnant, dwarfing life of the prison-camp at the very first opportunity. This came sooner than I anticipated. One afternoon a call was published for seventy or eighty men to go "to the west" as laborers. Having seen that my fellows in Siberia were not particularly in need and that there appeared no justifiable reason for me to remain so far away from centers where I might make better use of my training, I signed on as a "laborer," without having the slightest idea what the work would be. As pay we were to receive fifteen kopeks per day and better food than our prison fare. In two days sixty of us were off.

We had four freight cars with double rows of bunks for our *wagons-lits*. In the center of each was

a sheet-iron stove, on which depended our life. One moment it was red hot and the next, if the man watching it happened to fall asleep, we froze. So we had to establish a regular military régime for the nights and stand guard. Everywhere along the way we had the most friendly treatment and were allowed to buy plenty of hard-boiled eggs, pork chops, milk and bread.

Only in Tomsk did we learn that we were destined for either Katai or Zatka in the northern Urals, where the gold mines of the Tsar were located. Joe, who had elected to follow me into my life of labor, became quite downhearted with the thought of working underground and volunteered to me the information that:

“If the Tsar had to depend on the gold which I dig for him, he will never have a penny in the world.”

After several days en route, we arrived late one evening at the mines and were turned out into streets that had no lights and were filled with a strong unpleasant odor. After stumbling through the dark, we were ushered into unheated barracks, where the only light was from a single candle that one of our men placed on a table. The floor boards were weak and gave under our steps. Some one dropped a coin through a wide crack and heard it fall into water below. We had no supper and spent a most discouraging night.

The next morning, after being given just a drink of tea with no bread or any other food, we were lined up and told that we were to be shown where

we would work. Joe and I were made members of a group of twelve that were led to a most dilapidated-looking shack, which covered the pit-head of the mine. The earth had at some time slipped or something similar had happened, for the building was wracked way out of plumb and looked as though it might collapse at any moment.

By this time I thought that I had become so hardened to every surprise or threat which life had to offer, that nothing could bother me, but I was disabused on entering that shed. In the field men were known to develop all sorts of hallucinations. Some could not sleep with their faces turned up toward the sky, as they were haunted with the fear that it would collapse and fall upon them. They were often found sleeping with their faces turned to the side or down and with their hands spread over the cheeks, as though to protect them. My own particular horror happened to be that of falling into great, unseen pits, especially when we were working through strange territory at night.

And here I found all my fears multiplied a hundred fold. Before me was a black hole, ten or twelve feet in diameter, out of which warm, fetid air was coming, carrying up sounds of men shouting, the noise of horses' hoofs and the sharper reports of picks. All was muffled and damp. We stood gazing like dumb animals into this unknown passage to the bowels of the earth. There was an old enclosing railing and fence around three sides of the shaft mouth, while over it stood the far-from-confidence-inspiring, rickety frame on which the single log serv-

ing as drum for the heavy, wet rope showed deep grooves, worn by the turning of decades.

Then the ore-bucket came up and we were sent down four at a time. The huge barrel did not appeal to me as being any too strong, especially when we bumped the dripping rock walls below the short length of planking at the top of the shaft. We had been warned that the last hundred feet of the main shaft was filled with water, so that we must not make a mistake and go too low. With the three of us prisoners went one Russian workman to show us what to do.

My heart was in my mouth as I thought what would happen if the bottom of the barrel gave way. The shaft was miserably lighted by bulbs that were coated with dirt which seemed never to have been removed. Before we entered we heard the wheezy steam-engine chug-chug in an erratic rhythm that did not encourage confidence in its ability, and both at the pit mouth and on the way down we caught the sounds of the dynamite blasts, as well as the penetrating odor that followed them. It was more the atmospheric shock and pressure that we felt than the sounds we heard which added to my initial fears.

Finally the creaking drum stopped, as our guide shouted that we were just opposite the level where we were to work. Some one reached out of the shadow and hauled us alongside the landing-stage. My nausea was not helped by the necessity of having to step over that dark bit of shaft that lay between the barrel and the edge of the drift. I had no idea how far underground we were, as all I knew was

that the mine was about eight hundred feet deep and that the last hundred was flooded. We were at least five hundred below the surface, though it seemed more like five thousand.

Once in the drift our guide led us along by the light of his smoking oil mine-lamp to the end where we were to work. First we dug out the previously loosened quartz and blue-stone with our picks and were then set to drilling holes for the dynamite, working with short individual drills, each man sinking his own.

The air was warm and steamy, heavy with the moisture that came from the dripping walls. I soon grew hot and uncomfortable and thought of nothing save getting back up to free air. Strangely enough, as I afterward learned, every one of us new hands spent most of those first four hours wondering whether we would ever go back to the light and thinking just how we would step into the ore-bucket and out of it.

When we had gathered enough quartz and stone to make a carload, we had to push the little car along a very roughly laid track, that ran through depressions in places filled with water up to our knees. There seemed no way of draining these places, as there was no system of pumps in our drift. When we had the car at the end of the drift, our foreman shouted and swore for the better part of an hour before he succeeded in getting the ore-bucket alongside to dump our load.

After we had made our holes for the blasts, the foreman shot them with the least care and concern,

lighting the fuses and going only ten or twelve paces away. Finally our shift was ended and we climbed once more into the bucket for our swinging, twisting journey back to the light of day.

Consolation came in the really fine quality of the soup and the rest of the dinner they gave us. Warm shirts, a sort of cape and a very rough hat were furnished all of us, and some seemed quite reconciled to their lot of miners by the quality of the food. But Joe and I were of a different mind. During the afternoon I took a look around and began to lay my plans for the next move. Joe, with all his physical strength and prowess, showed clearly when darkness fell how dependent he was upon some one else to furnish the "wits" for the expedition. When I told him that he could not starve here and that, if I were away from the place in two days, he would also be away, he made me repeat the assurance over and over again before he would allow himself the consolation of sleep.

That afternoon our experiences had not been such as to add attraction to the place, and Joe was still under the influence of them. We discovered both from the prison garb which they wore and from the guard of soldiers who patrolled the place, that there were a certain number of criminals among our fellow-workers. After dinner, while we were looking about, Joe saw two of these men standing by a woodpile and started to talk with them in his hopelessly scant Russian. They were the most animal-like creatures that I had ever seen. I think he offered them something. In any case, instead of meeting him

in a natural way, one of them simply struck out and landed him a blow on the jaw. Joe was just in the act of paying back in kind, when I reached the spot and pulled him off, not, however, before one of the soldiers had seen the affair and came running over. Without asking a word of how the thing had started, he laid to with his rifle-butt on the heads and shoulders of the criminals and drove them to cover.

The following morning I went into the office and reported that I had been unable to see in the mine and I must see the doctor about both this and the sickness that overcame me underground. I had learned that he came once a week. I told the rather reckless youth in the office that I was an artist and might be of some use to them in work above ground. He chatted pleasantly enough with me and gave me considerable information about the mine. It seems it was about three hundred years old and that there had been little or no change made in the working methods since it was opened. The gold bars went directly to the imperial household in Petrograd, and this was only one of a dozen or more mines in that immediate district that sent gold and silver to the capital. I did not learn much of the details of the stamp-mill or of the output, for my mind was engrossed with other ideas.

There was a milkman in whose doings I developed more interest. I learned from the little shop around the corner of one of the buildings that he came every morning and so made a bargain with him. The following morning, for the sum of a silver rouble, he

was to wait at a certain spot I pointed out, ready to take us to the station at a gallop, if need be. Joe had to go below that afternoon for his four-hour shift, but I was allowed to remain idle until I could see the doctor. That gave me time to complete our arrangements.

In the morning the man was at his post and whirled us off, the moment we tumbled aboard, taking Dutch leave from the Tsar's source of pin-money with no regret or burning of conscience. I never did learn whether we were at Katai or Zatka, nor did I care much for this particular detail. When I tried, however, to find out from the milkman-peasant at what time the train left, so as to calculate how long we might be in danger of being apprehended, I received the far from illuminating answer:

"Oh, it goes soon, because there are people leaving every day."

Once in the station, we crawled up on the top shelf of a third-class car and lay flat there until the train started. When the conductor came around and threatened to be demonstrative, a silver rouble from one of the Tsar's mines bought us immediate immunity from either interference or the necessity of having any more regular form of ticket. This train that furthered our escape carried also several well-guarded small casks, containing bars that were to be added to the treasury of the Tsar, which was reckoned not in pounds but in poods and tons. However, our consciences were clear of having added more than a few grains to this unequal concentration of wealth.





## CHAPTER XI

### WANTED!

WITH one change of cars and the expenditure of another silver rouble, we reached Ufa, that picturesque city in the park-like region of the Urals. There we found a big transport of Austrian and German prisoners going into Russia to work on the railroad and joined this without difficulty. We searched out some empty bunks in one of the forward cars and had no trouble in enrolling ourselves as members of the gang, other than the objection made by the prisoners in that particular car against sharing their ration of soup and bread with two more mouths. We assured them of independent wealth that would enable us to finance our own commissariat.

With the train in motion, we soon learned that this time we were destined for the Volga River

bridge near Samara, where there was some sort of work that had to be done at once. For something like two days we lived quietly in our new company and then turned out at the eastern end of the long bridge to be quartered in barracks at the water level. While the *starshi*, who was to act as foreman on the work, was trying to puzzle out names and other things on the prisoners' cards, I came to his aid and was at once taken on as his assistant to help interpret. He lived in a separate little shack nearly under the first span of the bridge with a Cossack to guard and help him.

My faithful servant—and friend—Joe, one of the canniest peasant boys I have ever known, had a certain dry sense of humor, heightened by an ever-serious expression on his mischievous face, which often made a joke out of what could readily have been rated as real misery. One morning, while we were at work under the railroad-bridge, Joe was rolling a huge stone down to the river. He had been so long undernourished that his muscles, which were once like iron, failed him. He lost his balance, slipped down the icy slope and plunged into the hole that had been cut in the ice to permit of sinking the stone around the bridge pier. As I ran to his aid, I could not help laughing and shouted to him:

"You might better take off your clothes, before you go for a swim." A long "soldier's prayer," the scientific name for swearing, was his only response. If his prayer had been "answered," a great human catastrophe would have resulted, with the Tsar as the first victim and all "those top-heavy, wooden-

faced vodka-sponges of Russians" following close behind.

"If you would only get out with some of the energy you are expending on swearing, you would be half dry by this time," I remonstrated with him.

We had been forced to come here to be near the railroad, as this was our only means of the eventual escape which we always kept clearly before our mind's eye. On this particular morning we were hard at work reinforcing the piers of the long bridge over the Volga, where the freshets of the previous year had changed the channel and scoured out so much of the river bottom as to endanger the bridge's stability during future floods. We had to rise while it was still dark, pour down a cup of weak tea and begin each day's work by cutting huge blocks of ice frozen to a thickness of five or six feet. Then we rolled down large granite rocks into the icy water.

Our unchanging daily diet consisted of soup and that black, insipid relative of rice, the boiled buckwheat. Even in summer our shack would have been a dreary place to live; now it was awful. Our bunks were infested with vermin of unusual size and ferocity. Joe observed of one particularly gigantic specimen which he threw out on the floor:

"The impudent beast turned around and stared at me!"

However, these were insignificant details when compared with the unbearably severe cold and the inhuman brutality of our foreman and guard. Several times we worked at forty degrees below zero Fahrenheit, but that was not so bad as one day of

fifteen below, when the wind was blowing a gale. Our noses and ears were frequently frozen. The guards made us rub them briskly with snow until the blood ran to show that the circulation had been restored. If they caught us in the shack washing our face and hands in the ordinary way, with good liberal handfuls of water splashed well over them, the *starshi* was furious with us for wasting it. To attempt a bath or even to brush our teeth was a flagrant challenge for execution. The *starshi* and the Cossack never bathed or changed their clothes. What washing they did was accomplished by taking a mouthful of water and squirting it out into their hands in small amounts for rubbing it over their faces—much as a Chinese laundryman used to sprinkle a shirt.

If a prisoner happened to leave any of his things on the table and stepped out for a moment, the *starshi* grabbed them and kept them for himself. Joe often retaliated by putting oil and turpentine in the fellow's soup, but later abandoned this idea of revenge when he found the *starshi* did not even notice it. He contented himself then with collecting all the fattest vermin he could find and putting them in the old fellow's bed.

"We certainly found a fine place to starve in," he protested one evening just after our supper. "Look at this dirty food. It is not fit for a pig. And our salary—they promised us twenty-five kopeks a day, but are robbing us of every *filler* of it."

"Never mind, Joe," I said, "I'll get it out of

them." Just then the *starshi* entered, a husky, black-bearded brute.

"Quit your yarning!" he growled in his characteristic thundering voice. His long-haired Cossack followed close behind him.

"Better you tell me," I responded to his surprise, "when we are going to get our pay."

"What pay, you scum of the earth?"

"The twenty-five kopeks promised us by the commandant for our hard work," I answered quietly.

"You'll get nothing. You don't deserve the water you drink! . . . And as for you," he added, turning toward Joe and shaking his fist at him, "you'll get a beating, if you don't stop your talking."

"All right," retorted Joe, more to me than to the *starshi*, "then we'll go to the commandant." On hearing that, the *starshi* made a lunge toward Joe, but a well-timed blow from me on the side of his nose changed his course somewhat and dazed him for a second. The Cossack raised his wicked *nagaika*, or horse-whip, to strike me; but, before he could do so, I was on him and had my thumbs in his eyeballs, determined to blind him if necessary to make him give way. He yelled with pain and went down, afraid to resist for fear I would dig deeper. I went to the floor with him, taking his sword and pistol. In the struggle we knocked over the oil lamp. All was dark for a moment. Then one round spot on the floor began burning and with a flash like a faint explosion the flames leaped to the surface of a fur coat that hung on the wall, ran up it and—everything was ablaze.

"Beat the dog!" Joe yelled, forgetting in his lust for revenge that we were in the midst of flames.

"Grab our bag!" I shouted back. "We've got to run for it. Take care! you'll burn yourself!" The flames had shot like a flash of lightning around the room. The Cossack was begging for his life. Throwing our bag through the door, we turned and pulled both of them out of the house by their feet.

Following our first impulse, we started to run toward the railway embankment and were well up the slope, when the idea struck me to add to our equipment the two signal lanterns that were burning on the other side near the bottom of the permanent way. So we ran round and picked those up. I thought of the trains as our surest and only means of escape.

"They are going for the Cossack patrol," said Joe, voicing the fear of both of us. As their barracks were but a verst away, we had only fifteen or twenty minutes to make good our escape. Joe wanted to cross the bridge, lighted up by the flames of our burning shack. But we discovered some of the soldiers in the first little guard-house running toward us to see what was up. Our hearts went into our mouths as we heard the alarm signal start its shrill, unceasing blasts. We looked about in deadly fear. It must be remembered that the life of a prisoner was in his own hands and depended entirely upon his wits and brute force. We had actually no legal protection, as we were creatures quite outside the law and could be killed with impunity. This may help to make clearer some of our moves and actions.

Then Joe had an idea. The big barrel-like water

tank at the end of the bridge to be used in case of fire was so high that a ladder ran up both the outside and inside of it. Joe said he knew it was only half full. So we decided to hide in there until the search was over and then board a train in the early morning. But before we could put this idea into execution, Joe whispered:

"Look! There's a train!" and sure enough we could see the two lights of an express just emerging from the dark on the bridge. We were standing in the shadow of the tank and gave them the signal for "slow down" with our lanterns. The engineer obeyed and, by the time the third or fourth car had come abreast of us, brought the train to a speed easy for us to jump it.

We managed to open a door, having thrown our lanterns down the embankment, and found ourselves in the semi-dark corridor of a sleeper just behind the restaurant car. As the train picked up speed, we saw the moving outline of a group of Cossacks galloping toward our burning shack.

"Hurry up, brothers-in-law," said Joe with infinite pleasure, "you may be too late."

"Now, how about it, Joe?" I asked him, "isn't this more like it, traveling *de luxe*? What would you like, wine or vodka?"

"I'd like first to know how long it is going to last," he parried with questionable optimism. We had taken possession of the small folding seat in the vestibule at the end of the corridor and I had found a bit of black bread in my bag, which we had begun to eat, when suddenly the corridor door opened and a

very drunken Russian officer came out square upon us. Our faces must have been as white with fear as his was red with vodka. He stared at us in amazement, as though forming the words of command to order us shot, and then, in a very mild, almost apologetic voice, said:

"*Zdravstvuiye!* (Greetings!)" with the friendliness so typical of one in his condition. "What are you doing out here?" he added, looking from one to the other of us.

"We missed our transport and thought we would jump on the next train going toward Tomsk."

"Oh, I see," he murmured, as though he had discovered something which entirely cleared up the mystery. "But it is cold out here." Then in a confidential tone and laying his hand on my shoulder: "Would you like a little drink?" We hesitated.

"Surely you want it," he said, answering his own question. "Just wait a second." He came back almost immediately with a bottle of vodka and some sandwiches, urging us to drink more freely than we did at the outset. "And now," he said, "step inside and tell us where you have been and what your profession was at home."

As he led us into the dining-car, we could hardly see in the glaring light and thick cigarette smoke. A handsome young woman was sitting at one of the tables, surrounded by three stupidly drunken officers. She looked annoyed and nervous. Through the veil of smoke I seemed to feel that I had somewhere before seen this pretty face. As she smiled at me, I



became certain of it and recalled her as one of the volunteer nurses in the Kieff hospital, the fortress of my Snow Princess. She greeted me most cordially and told the officers where she had seen me.

I was as shy as a child in her presence. The contrasts of the last hour were too great for me and the present situation too anomalous. The only real pleasure was the sense of speed in the smoothly running train, with its short stops. A bit of trouble arose when one of the officers showed jealousy because she conversed with me in French, which he could not understand. He asked her rudely:

"How on earth can you find any interest in talking with those damned prisoners?"

"Because," she answered with some show of feeling, "they are not only decent but because they are the only sober people in this train."

All this time Joe, who had never been in such royal presence before, wanted to have everything translated to him and nudged me once with the question:

"Why don't you tell them who you are? She will fall in love with you at once instead of those bum Russians." Later, when the pretty lady said something rather cordial to me, he demanded:

"Did she say so?"

Affairs did not, however, move in that direction, as the rebuffed officer later searched out a general from somewhere on the train and joined him in questioning us. The rather unpromising result of this was that the officer was ordered to arrest us and turn

us over to the military commander at the next station.

We were left alone for a few moments in the restaurant-car. The young nurse suddenly appeared and seated herself beside me.

"I have just a few moments before I retire; but I must tell you not to be afraid. That officer wanted to make things uncomfortable for me. Stay in the train and don't leave until it is absolutely necessary."

In the early hours of the morning, however, when the train was slowing down for the station, we jumped out and saw square in front of us a prisoner-transport train on the very next track. The door of a car was open, and we swung ourselves up. Hardly were we in, when the train began to move. First we were backed down into the station and then started for the west—back to the Volga, perhaps!

As we passed our luxurious express, our officer friend was looking for his charges, peering everywhere to try to discover us. Joe suddenly leaned far out of our car and gave him a whack across the head, with a joyous cry.

"Are you mad? What are you doing?" I asked in amazement.

"Giving the drunken rat something to remember us by. Just imagine how nicely we could have traveled, if that dog hadn't interfered. But he got his, just the same."

Then we discovered that this transport was bound for the Urals and the mines! That was not for us. We had gone through our mining career and were

off at the next station to try our luck for a train going east. We had not long to wait, as there were transports of prisoners moving all the time. We boarded the first of these and headed for "home" and the family, having had quite enough, for the time being, of travels abroad.



## CHAPTER XII

### PRISONERS' LOGS

**B**ACK at home late in March, we had a royal welcome from the family, who saw us getting out of the sleigh and came running to carry the packages we had brought back for the larder. That first day they entertained us as guests, without allowing us to share in a single worry or to think of the future.

I had warned Joe not to tell a word of our experiences, threatening him with nothing less than a killing, if he got us into trouble by his lively tongue. Officially we had no difficulty, as the Slavic officer who was the doyen of the prisoners took my case very sympathetically. He asked me how, with my serious wounds, I could have expected to stand the heavy work of the mines and promised to see that the authorities made no trouble over my quick return.

It was only a few days later that one of the officers, seeing my drawings, reported on them to the

head of the military building committee, who had been in charge of the construction of the forty-odd barracks that went to make up the camp. The happy result was that I was summoned one afternoon to go to the house of this man to talk with him about working for the committee.

This head architect was one Vladimir Philipoffsky, the most human and most ideal gentleman that I met in all my years in Siberia. He was a Polish nobleman with all the charm and humor characteristic of this talented race. He gave me tea, treated me as an equal and, what was so very welcome, gave me in the excellent French which he spoke all the latest news of the outside world. He commissioned me almost immediately to paint the portraits of his wife and himself—when I was not otherwise occupied.

For just at this time I accumulated, through a young Hungarian Jew, a rush of work which ended in a great scandal for him. He secured permission to go out once a week to the synagogue in the town and there represented himself to his co-religionists as an artist who would gladly make crayon drawings from photographs. With the photographs in hand he came to me and gave me the work part of the deal to perform, without telling me of all the kudos which he was reaping, in addition to the probable margin of profit he was taking.

After he had secured me some ten or twelve of these orders at from six to seven roubles apiece, the fact somehow leaked out in the town that he was

not the artist but that it was another prisoner—of my name. So they set a little trap for him by inviting him to the house of one of the rich merchants who had previously given him an order and, when they had duly praised his finished work, asked him to make a small sketch of their little boy from life. This sprung the trap and left him at their mercy, which took the unexpected form of asking him why he could not have given me the credit and brought me to them instead of indulging in this hoax.

With this source of work closed, Philipoffsky asked me if I could undertake the designing of the ceiling and the mural decorations in the ball-room of the new officers' club at the camp. I not only accepted the designing but also the modeling and entire execution as well, for I knew that thus I could make more money—and money was what we needed these days. He at once fitted up a small room in the club as a studio for me and used always to visit me twice a day, not only to inspect the work but to bring me the cigarettes, chocolates and other little presents in which he delighted. He treated me almost as a child, with a fine sense of consideration that touched me deeply.

His attitude created an unexpected problem for me and brought out more strongly the characteristics of the man. As I came back into the life of the camp after our short absence, I found quite a different atmosphere prevailing. In the evenings we assembled in some quiet corner of the big common room of our barracks to listen to the interesting narratives of those who had gone through the most unusual ad-

ventures or to the more scientific experiences of experts in every walk of life. It was our "Thousand and One Nights," each evening bringing a different story with its thrill and entertainment. At one time it would be the illuminating talk of a judge, recounting his contacts with notorious criminals; at another it was a unique exposition of biblical lore, that held us in rapt attention. The next evening belonged to the turtle-exporter, a husky German, who told his humorous story of life in the South Sea Islands. He deserted his ship and fell literally into the hands of some native cannibals. He taught them to eat the turtles, which were in great abundance on their islands.

His only capital was his knowledge that, if you turn a turtle over on its back, he is yours until you choose to call for him. So he worked with the natives among the turtles that came to sun themselves on the beach and gradually found a way of marketing them in Australia. Then he became the owner of a sailboat and later had even a pier and steamer of his own. With the latter he shipped to Europe and turned up at home himself, eighteen years after his desertion from the ship. That was the week the war broke out, just in time for the government to seize him for military service. And so—here he is!

Then we had a magician, clever beyond anything we had ever seen on the stage, who entertained us not only with his tricks but with expositions of the ways in which many of the most successful deceptions are performed.

Following him was a German who had been a

member of the Foreign Legion in French North Africa. He had killed an officer in Sidi-bel-Abbes in a plot to escape with two other men and had been forced to flee through the desert to Oran and thence to the coast. Once he was so near to being captured that he was compelled to bury himself in the sand with just the tip of his nose out for air. When he finally succeeded in reaching Germany, it was only to be arrested there for his earlier desertion from military service.

Again and in great contrast we had a missionary from the darkest part of Central East Africa, who told us among other things of the annual confession day, when the natives came together and confessed all their thefts and other offenses of the twelve months past without fear of any punishment befalling them. After all had spoken, each took a branch, broke it and threw it into a pit, where a fire was started. Once the branches were burned, the score was cleared and never could be revived.

At another extreme of our many-pointed human compass was a very refined, Belgian hotel-owner, who had come into contact with many of the great personages directing the war—Lloyd George and men of his type. He had entertained also King Alfonso of Spain and told us in detail of the precautions that had to be taken for the safety of such royal guests.

Practically every profession that life and circumstances can produce was represented in our gatherings. There was one mysterious-acting fellow among the prisoners, a very close-mouthed Austrian about



whom no one could discover anything. He exhibited, however, a broad knowledge about diplomatic relations and the most important events in the international field. Finally, after some time passed, he chose to reveal his identity.

As we had come to suspect, he was one of the ablest international spies. He had lived in a sumptuously furnished residence in Petrograd, where his parties were noted for their splendor and extravagance. Among his constant guests were diplomats, generals and other important personalities, who often turned talkative under the influence of his fine wines and champagne. The unraveling of the notorious Richter case was due to his clever work.

His first step in this matter was the discovery that whenever our Austrian general staff issued any strategic plans or orders affecting the Russian frontier, the Russians very shortly put out a countering order or made a defending movement of troops. He then went at once to our general staff and developed a plan for sending out strategic orders to all the corps commanders along the Russian border, each order different from every other. All of these were left without a Russian countering movement except the one that went to Prague. The traitor must be there.

So he proceeded to the Bohemian capital and discovered there the head of the Russian secret service, operating as a peddler. In due course he traced the fellow to the door of Colonel Richter, Chief of Staff to the local general, and on one of the peddler's later visits surprised them in the act of transferring

a large sum of money. The Russian was imprisoned for a long term, while a loaded revolver was left in the table drawer of the colonel's cell as his form of the hemlock. Before he was left alone, he admitted to his jailer:

"Well, I gambled and lost! There's an end of it."

The teller of this tale had good reason to hide his identity, as the Russian government had put a reward of two thousand roubles on his head, alive or dead. He had various uniforms, we found out later, and was really not a prisoner at all, for one day he quietly disappeared to go work in some other field.

Then there was Daubek, who was destined to play a very important rôle in our lives that spring. He had been a clever map-draftsman but found other talents within himself that proved more lucrative in the field of smuggler of saccharine between Switzerland, Bavaria and Austria. He was a flaxen-haired, blue-eyed youth with so disingenuous a face that, when he put on his look of bland innocence and told the hard-boiled Bavarian police some melting story, they even in one case gave him a mark to help him on his way instead of examining his tell-tale rucksack.

He had a wonderful nose for character and, before he had been long in the camp, knew all the suspicious individuals about and just what use could be made of each of them. It was he who came to me in my new quarters, where I had been given a separate room by the building committee, and laid before me the plans which created the need for every rouble we could scrape together.

First, it must be realized that ever since the word "Prison" had come into our vocabulary, the desire to escape at whatever hazard was just natural instinct. The inventive power of men made desperate by prison surroundings resulted in some wonderful displays of daring and courage. We had all been turning over in our minds what we could do to get out of this vast land, and it was Daubek who brought to me now the first concrete proposal.

It was that those among us who could get together the money and who had the necessary temerity should secretly build a boat—the materials for which he had ways to secure—and head down the Chulym and the Ob for the two thousand miles to the Arctic Ocean, in the hope of meeting there some Scandinavian fishing craft that would take us back to freedom.

Today I realize all the absurdity of this plan, but at that time no effort appeared too great to enable us to escape from the prison camp, where Russian brutality and negligence, starvation, coupled with the rigors of the harsh climate, and the sweeping epidemics of typhus and other diseases were taking a severe toll from our numbers.

Our little group of six or seven who later came to consider seriously the details of the plan was gathered in a corner of the barracks, when a young fellow, clad in a big Russian coat, entered. No one would have guessed that it was Daubek.

"What news?" asked two or three of us at once. He glanced at the guard and smiled confidently.

"Lots," he answered, rubbing his hands, "and damn good news at that!" he added, as he shook the

snow from his coat and took a seat in our circle. He went on:

"I have a place all ready to build the boat. Sem-enoff will buy the tools and lumber for us, and by working hard we can be ready by May."

"That's great! Now we are getting somewhere," one of the group remarked. "How much money do we need at once?"

"A hundred roubles will cover our immediate needs," Daubek answered. "We shall have time enough to scrape up the rest."

One hundred roubles was then the entire fortune of the group; but we needed more, far more. Sem-enoff, ex-convict, anarchist and fellow-worker with Daubek, would demand at least one hundred roubles for his services. Thus our every effort went into securing money. Letters were mailed through secret channels, asking help; watches and gold rings were sold, and whoever could work looked for a job to raise the necessary funds. Soon we had another one hundred fifty roubles in our treasury. The German judge received a visit from a reputed member of the Esperanto Club who brought in something. With this nucleus we decided to go ahead with our ship-building operations.

Legat, a very clever and most attractive Tyrolese country school-teacher, six feet five inches in height and strong in proportion, took the initiative both in assembling the tools and superintending the work. Daubek was employed at this time in a carpenter shop in town and brought to the prison-camp authorities a demand from his boss for five more work-

ers. In this way we obtained permission to go out each day for our own building operations. Legat had secured the use of an empty hay-shed that lay close to the river bank between the camp and the town, but nearer the latter. Into this we stole in the early mornings and continued there until dark.

I had already worked out the design of the craft we were to build, and Legat had some of the initial pieces cut the first time I reported on the job itself. Our ship was to be about twenty feet long with a beam of eight or nine, flat-bottomed, with the bow shaped so that it would be easier to propel. Forward I designed a deckhouse for protection against bad weather, then places for four oarsmen, and aft another covered section for provisions and hanging meat. On top of this the helmsman was to take his stand to work the long sculling-oar with which he steered. It was by no means a racing-yacht or a pleasure-craft in the fineness of its lines, but it had for us the elements of the service needed.

We were no more than started on our building work before we discovered the task much more difficult than we had supposed. The tools were primitive, while the lumber was tough and wet. Undernourished and unaccustomed to this type of work, the group made such slow progress that some of us began to doubt the possibility of our ever achieving our plan. In our nervous condition of fatigue and fear of discovery every little incident took on an exaggerated importance. One evening, as I returned to my room, I found the guard there waiting for me. He greeted me with:

"What the hell were you doing out at this hour? The commandant has been looking all over for you." My heart was in my mouth.

"What did he want?" I asked anxiously.

"How in the devil should I know? Come with me, and that right away!"

The commandant took me into his private room and closed the door significantly. This seemed to me to spell disaster. Then he opened a blue-print on his desk and waited again. I was growing jumpy.

"Here is a plan of the new officers' club. Can you decorate the inside of it and make it very beautiful, or . . ."

"Or what?" I asked rather too impatiently.

"Or don't you feel like wasting your time in doing that? You will be paid for your work."

"Most certainly," I answered in great relief. "I am always ready to make beautiful things, if there is some one to appreciate them." With the bargain struck, he gave me a pass to go out whenever I wished, so that I had now complete freedom of movement. Better still, my boss was to be my Polish nobleman friend, who, moreover, offered to give me a room in his house and to keep me busy until the very end of my stay in camp. But I felt compelled to refuse his proffered shelter, as I did not wish to separate myself from my companions at this critical time.

Then one day while I was engaged in the decorative work, Philipoffsky came, looked at me very significantly and said:

"I have been thinking much about you these days

and want to tell you something as a friend." He seemed to look into my very soul, and I should have had to confess everything to him, if he had pressed me, as I could not dissimulate before a man of his type.

"I think you are far too intelligent not to know that an escape from this part of Siberia is absolutely hopeless. I say this for your own benefit."

I could not help but feel keenly the contrast in my spirits, when I visited our shipyard the next day. In order not to spoil their optimism, I said nothing about Philipoffsky's admonition to me. However, I did warn them against the noise of tools and their loud talking, which I had heard at a distance, but all too late; for just as I was getting ready to return, one of the officers connected with the remount camp near-by appeared and commanded in a harsh voice:

"Stand at attention! Don't you see that there is an officer here?" Then stepping inside the shack, he examined the work and workers critically and asked in a deep baritone:

"What are you doing here? Are you all prisoners of war? What is this, a boat?"

Daubek immediately took command of the situation, explained that we were working for a carpenter in town, exhibited our permits for this and said that we knew nothing more about the job.

"Who is this fellow?" the officer demanded, pointing to me. Once he had seen my permit to circulate freely, he simply commanded:

"Keep the work going and do not go out! I shall see the job finished!" Then he swung on his heel and

left. We danced about and gave vent to our relief at our narrow escape. Daubek was tickled to think that some one had at least recognized our work as a boat and confessed to us that the papers he had shown the man were forged ones. This Daubek was a clever fellow. As a reaction from the shock, the work went forward with renewed vigor.

By the middle of May, after we had been intermittently at work for over a month, the boat was caulked and ready for launching, just as I was able to give Daubek sixty roubles which I had collected from my decorating work. It was very funny to see him returning from one of his shopping expeditions with two sheepskin coats on and many things under them. Sleeping-bags and canvas for tents which we had waterproofed with congealed fish-oil were duly stored away in the after hatch of the boat.

In addition we gathered enough food for at least sixty days—almost two hundred pounds of smoked fish, salt pork, flour, salt, sugar, raisins, caviar and nearly thirty yards of sausages.

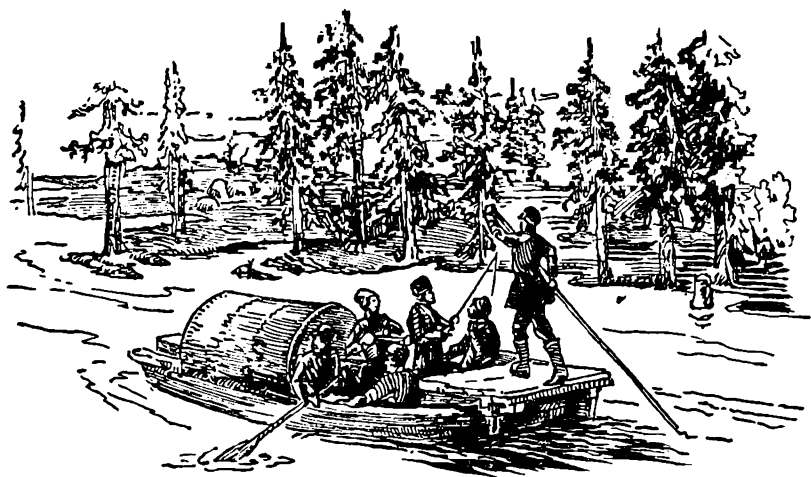
With everything ready, then came the momentous question of the actual start. The night was fixed. On the evening of the day preceding, Daubek and Legat decided to tell their few intimates and to distribute among them all their scanty belongings which they were not to take along. Their friends reacted in various ways.

“Oh you canny fox! And you never peeped a word of it!” came from one. Another:

“Great! I wish I had the guts to go. . . . Send us a card.”



Then the eventful evening came. Daubek and Legat slipped into the forest during the after-supper walk of the prisoners, while the officers managed also to get through the guards at their barrack and thread their way along the forest belt that bordered the river. I reached the shed about eleven and found them all gathered. Shortly after midnight it was decided to start. At this time of the year the night was never absolutely dark.



Semenoff was also there with Daubek to give his aid and accompany us past the bridge at Achinsk, where we might easily run into trouble. When we tried to move our craft from the shed, we discovered to our dismay that we could not budge her. After several desperate attempts Daubek and Semenoff went out in search of help. The rest of us waited in agonized apprehension. Before long they came back with several husky Russians, all friends of one or the other of them. Daubek told me later that they had

literally to pull these fellows out of their beds. With our reinforcements we managed to shove the boat into the river and—she floated! That was one point gained.

But now, for certain additional reasons which I do not feel warranted in giving here, my connection with the expedition came to an abrupt end, and I was soon back in camp in the hospital, being treated for the operation which I had earlier been compelled to undergo for a serious infection that had developed under one of my arms.

The moment I was out of the hospital, I went to see Philipoffsky to make arrangements to resume my work. One of the first things he said to me was:

“You see what happened to those poor fools who tried to escape.”

“What?” I asked with impatience, as I had received no news whatever of the expedition.

“They have been arrested and will be back here in a very short time.” And they were—not only back but in jail. That was after the middle of August. A week later a gendarme officer came to my room and questioned me most minutely about my activities and my connections, searching my papers for some evidence which he seemed to be expecting to find. Then he ordered me to remain in my quarters all day and went away.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE OTHER HALF OF THE STORY

TWO or three days with no further word made me feel that the authorities had probably forgotten me. It was a hot day, and I went out to have a swim in the Chulym, an old friend by now. Suddenly the weather changed. I had barely time to jump out and dry myself before snow began swirling through the air. By the time I reached my barrack, the ground was white.

That evening at about ten o'clock, when I had let Joe go back to his quarters and was just ready to turn in, I heard a great, huge voice calling my name. My room was now on the third floor of a barrack in a corridor with three doctors. Looking out of the window, I discovered a guard of six soldiers entering the building. Their kindly warning gave me time to burn all the letters in my desk which I thought might in any way compromise my friends.

It was almost ludicrous the way they went about my arrest. I heard them passing through all the halls below, opening doors and shouting my name. Finally one burst in through my own room and repeated the question.

"Yes, I am Imrey."

"Come here!" he shouted back to the others, and

four of them entered and stood with fixed bayonets in a line before me. It would have been good comic opera, if the import were not so serious.

"You are arrested! Take him!" As the soldiers seized me, finally letting go and allowing me to walk between them, the sergeant major gathered up my drawings to take along as some sort of evidence against me.

At the prison they took all my papers from my wallet and shoved me into a dark cell. An iron bed with two boards laid on it was the single article of furniture that appeared, as my eyes became accustomed to the darkness. In this filthy place they left me without food or water until the following afternoon. I paced the cell like a caged animal, until I was dazed. Believing that they intended to starve me to death, I kicked on the door with such fury that the guard finally came to my end of the long corridor to see what was up.

When he opened the door, I started to yell for the commandant and resisted when he tried to push me back. Fortunately there was an officer of the jail guard within hearing, who came to see what was the trouble. When asked why I had been given nothing to eat, the *starshi* said there had been no order to feed me. The officer cut the knot by sending for Joe, to whom I gave notes to my family kitchen, to Philipoffsky and to another place where I had been taking some of my meals.

The results were miraculous. A few hours later the door opened and the nobleman's servant entered, carrying a huge tray, filled with every imaginable

good thing for my dinner. Almost at the same moment his right-hand man appeared with a basket of cakes, sandwiches and rolls and with the news that Philipoffsky had set to work on my behalf.

While I was still eating, Joe came bringing me a big bowl of soup, pork chops with potatoes and tomatoes and a marvelous supply of doughnuts. The poor fellow was so surprised and rattled at seeing me in this reduced position that he dropped, in his excitement, the package of cigarettes which he had intended to smuggle in to me. The *starshi* pounced upon it and called him more names than I had ever heard flung at any one. The soldiers of the guard outside the door looked on with apparently emotionless faces; but, when the *starshi* had gone and the door had been locked, they showed that they were evidently sorry for the treatment which had been meted out to us. They opened the small watch-hole and told me to hold my cap under it, pouring in, as I did so, a plentiful supply of cigarettes from their own pockets.

Late the following afternoon I was summoned before the military court for a hearing. The room was filled with smoke and reeked with vodka. On the bench the head of the court was a colonel, decorated with every conceivable medal that the Tsar ever put into circulation. I thought to myself:

"This fellow is a dangerous devil." Then in a drunken voice he began:

"Prisoner, you are accused . . . hic . . . of traveling under a false . . . hic . . . name in order to escape from the country . . . hic . . . Why

have you drawn this picture? Eh?" At this he exhibited one of my drawings upside down. "It looks very suspicious." Turning to the other members of the court, who were heavy with vodka, he said:

"We'll fix him . . . hic! *Starshi* . . . you dirty louse, take him to . . . hic . . . the place where we put the rest of them." Whereupon the *starshi*, the more frightened of the two of us, hauled me back down the dark corridor to my cell.

Later that evening a familiar voice called me to the peep-hole in the door. It was Daubek!

"The whole crowd is out of the hospital. . . . Yes, we are at the far end of the corridor. Come along."

"But how can I go?"

"Wait a minute. I'll let you out." He was already at home in the jail and soon had the guard opening my door for me. Hardly knowing what was happening, I went with him to see my companions and hear from them the story of their voyage to the Arctic. After our first greetings in these changed surroundings, Daubek took up the tale which I was so anxious to hear.

"Well, we were slipping down stream. It was wonderful to be active and free again. The current carried us on with the stars smiling down encouragement to us. Everything was cool and peaceful. The river was in flood like a great lake, with trees standing out here and there and occasionally an island. In one of these flooded fields we collided with a tree, whose branches nearly carried two of us overboard. Legat stood guard at the rudder while the rest of us

slept. We woke up that first morning with sore throats and inflamed eyes, resulting from the cold. We looked more like ship-wrecked sailors than a party of gay adventurers. At noon we disembarked at the edge of a forest, built a lean-to of branches and prepared a hot meal.

"While we were there we saw any number of white squirrels and ermines. The rest did us lots of good, so that the next day we made very good progress. Legat discovered the river was full of fish, which gave us not only good sport but plenty of food."

Legat was known always as a good woodsman and had thoroughly prepared for every eventuality of the woods and river.

"On the fifth morning we saw a few cows in a meadow and presently came in sight of a village. The houses were rudely made of willow branches and mud, with no windows. The roof was also of branches and had a hole in the middle to let the smoke out. Most of the inhabitants we could see were women, and they turned out to be Mongolian Tartars. They were short and very broad-shouldered. This was emphasized by their belted-in sheepskin coats. They were terribly frightened and stretched out their hands, crying 'No, no, no!' to all of our questions. Finally we found an old man who was more friendly than the rest and could talk a little Russian.

"He took us to his *kolta* and set us down around his fire, serving us with a grayish alcoholic drink, while he kept repeating something like '*Umeh*,

*umch!*" The drink we found was made of mare's milk and honey and was called *kumys*.

"That evening we went into another house, where a crowd in picturesque costume was already gathered. Each one had a small rug on which he sat. A sick little girl was lying in the center of the group near the fire, wrapped in a great mass of clothing. A wise man, or shaman, appeared, clad in a fantastic cos-



tume, with a long head-ornament consisting of two horns and cleverly arranged horsehair braids hanging down his back. In his hand he carried a barrel-shaped drum, trimmed with many-colored ribbons. He began to murmur slowly and beat his drum, as he took long strides up and down the room, raising his knees high at every step. Gradually he moved faster and faster, crying out and rubbing his finger over the head of the drum in a way that brought out a weird, penetrating sound.

"Suddenly he started a mad dance, and his face, painted red, white and black, assumed a devilish expression. His body shook and shivered, as he beat his drum and sang in a high, trembling voice to the



most uncanny rhythm I ever heard. The effect was very strange. All of us felt that our legs and shoulders were shaking and shivering, following the irresistible rhythm of his mad *danse Macabre*. A moment later he suddenly stopped. We felt peculiarly exhausted and fell asleep almost immediately.

"The following morning, when we left, they presented us with a basketful of eggs, a wooden jar of honey and some *kumys*, for which we gave them two roubles, even though they did not seem to want it. As we continued our journey, we could see by the trees that the water was rising. Here and there we came across skeletons of animals in the trees, showing that they had been caught by some sudden flood and carried to their death—some of them probably years ago.

" 'Now we are absolutely cut off from every one,' said one of our group. His remark was well justified. A feeling of desolation overcame us. We tried to throw off the gloom by singing gay songs and joking, but this only helped somehow to emphasize the dead monotony around and before us. On the twentieth day out our desire for some excitement, no matter what, was more than gratified.

"It began as we landed near a large Tartar village, the last one to the north. The people soon gathered in agitated groups. We approached them unsuspecting, but they spoke to us in short, threatening sentences. The women hurried the children away. The men pointed to Legat with evident anger, even rage, and began edging slowly toward us.

"No wonder they were scared at him, for he

looked threatening enough with his great height and his long kitchen knives sticking out of the legs of his over-large boots. I noticed that some of them carried guns. They seemed to be looking for trouble.

“‘Let them come!’ some one shouted. What followed was so sudden that I was unable to keep track of the events. A coarse-faced Tartar tried to pull one of the knives out of Legat’s boot. He gave the man a powerful punch. At the same instant a group of the natives jumped at him. That put us all into action. We saw immediately that everything had been prearranged. Our tactics were to show the barbarians right at the start such energy that they would be discouraged. But we were badly mistaken. With vicious lunges we knocked down about a dozen of them. They stopped for a minute but, as soon as they saw their comrades bleeding, they became crazed, and the whole village ran at us.

“We tried to take strategic positions, so that each of us was protected by another. Legat fought desperately with his two big kitchen knives, covered by the judge and myself. One of us got possession of a gun by kicking its owner in the stomach. The rest of the crew used the flat of their hatchets. The Tartars had almost encircled us by this time, but their indefatigable rushes were successfully repulsed with a few broken skulls as a result. They went at Legat more violently than at any of the rest of us, and twice I saved him by shooting a Tartar who was just about to plunge a long knife into his back. But after my gun was empty, he fell with a deep wound

in his groin. A tremendous shout went up, as the Tartars rushed in upon him.

“ ‘Use the hatchets!’ I yelled and plunged into the group, making good my command. The women then also began attacking us from the rear with stones. Although we were holding our ground now, we saw that they were determined to fight to the end. They fell back and rushed us time and again, with rhythmic shouts. For a moment they withdrew and were silent. We felt victory was almost in our hands, when with a wild battle-cry they once more charged blindly at us. A sharp stone from one of the women struck down one of our group. I could hardly keep the Tartars off by constantly lunging with my big knife.

“Bleeding and exhausted, we tried to hold our ground, hitting and stabbing any one of them who dared close in; yet we soon saw it was a losing game for us. The losses of the Tartars made them more furious, but we could not give up and leave our two wounded comrades to die. More people were running out from the village, and we were just preparing for a final attack, when I received a wicked wound from a sharp stone. The judge was bleeding at his mouth and ear. The Tartars were grouping themselves for the rush. Looking at my comrades, I saw total exhaustion and despair written on their faces. My arm was stiff. It was a frightful moment . . .”

Daubek hesitated for an instant, seeming to be living over those few seconds which meant so much in his life.

"In our excitement we had not noticed the approach of galloping cavalrymen, who were plowing their way through the crowd, using their naked swords freely. It was a detachment of border Cossacks! What would they do? . . . The Tartars abandoned the fight and scampered away to their mud huts. A young officer with drawn revolver rode at the head of the group. He shouted to the natives:

" 'You dirty scum of the earth; I'll burn your lousy mud nests, if you dare to touch the Tsar's prisoners!' So word had gone ahead of us.



"We now had a chance to attend to Legat and the others of us who were wounded. Every one was greatly relieved at the unexpected turn events had taken. We did not think of anything but getting out of the hands of those enraged villagers. There were twelve of them dead and some twenty-odd wounded.

" 'Was any of your party killed?' asked the officer.

" 'Not so far. Only the Tartars.'

" 'Never mind those dog-headed beasts! They are all right until they see blood. The sight of it crazes

them.' This remark explained everything. We told him that we did nothing to incite their rage and that they themselves had started the fight.

" 'I know,' said the officer, 'a few weeks ago several murders were committed among them, and when they saw you with those big knives in that fellow's boot, they thought you were the culprits.'

"We were taken to the Cossack barracks and were well treated by the young officer, who acted more like a host than a captor. He served tea and played the *balalaika* for us. The men sang some of those melancholy Ural songs, so characteristic of the region. They were a post of twenty-four with a single officer, lonesome and glad to meet people from outside their desolate exile. His friendliness evinced itself still further in his promise not only to keep us there as long as he could but to treat us as friends while we stayed.

" 'You must know, gentlemen, that in the name of the Tsar you are under arrest, but we need not talk about that.' We lay down on the fresh straw in the corridor and slept like logs after our exhausting battle. I was in worse shape than any of the others with my badly swollen arm and a high fever.

"The young officer wrote out his report, asking us one by one to tell our stories. I was in terrible pain and late in the afternoon lost consciousness. I was awakened, I do not know how long after this, by the tramping feet of the Cossacks and the rattling, strange speech of excited Tartars. On opening my eyes I saw Legat lying on the floor near me, covered with fresh blood.

“‘For heaven’s sake, what has happened?’ I asked.

“Poor Legat weakly tried to explain but was interrupted by frequent paroxysms of pain.

“‘The boat,’ he said, ‘they brought it here . . . right below the barrack . . . it was unguarded. We thought . . . we thought . . . well, we thought we would go on. We called you, too, . . . but you couldn’t come . . . We slipped along for a ways . . . Eh! I can’t . . .’ The judge told me the rest of it.

“‘The Tartars were watching us and ordered us out of the boat. We kept on rowing as hard as we could. They ran in the opposite direction. We couldn’t imagine why but soon found out. The river made a great curve around the village. The Tartars were waiting for us on the other side. They repeated their order, stoned us and even shot. We were rescued from another attack by the timely appearance of the Cossacks.’

“‘The young officer shortly afterward entered. His friendliness changed into a cold, official tone as he informed us:

“‘You will all go back to Achinsk with a Cossack escort and you will face court-martial for your attempted escape from the prison camp.’

“‘After a long and tiresome journey we arrived here ten days ago. I’ve got four years *churma* and Legat three for our Arctic travels.’”

Going back to my cell after this long recital and all the other talk that kept us together until well

after midnight, I felt much more reconciled to my jail surroundings, knowing that the others were near.

My sense of contentment had a rude shock two or three days later, when the guard came to my cell, motioned to me to follow him and unlocked a door farther down the corridor. He simply pushed me in, slammed the rattling door behind me and bolted it.

For a moment I could not believe my eyes. There were creatures, hard to describe, more like some prehistoric troglodyte throwbacks than modern men, staring at me and coming toward me with curious, greedy eyes. They had long hair that fell on their shoulders, streaming from under the sad remnants of military caps they wore; beards that bushed out to meet the matted, unkempt locks around the ears and long enough to reach nearly to their waists. They stared at me like hungry animals, wild and revolting. In strange voices they began to question me. What had I done? Had I killed some one?

When they found I had simply taken part in an attempt to escape, they lost interest in me and turned their backs, to go to their bench along the opposite wall under the high, barred windows. There were twenty-four of them in that small cell some twenty feet in length and twelve or fourteen in width, most of them inmates of it for over two years. During all this time they had received only their scanty rations of food—no underwear or uniforms, no shoes, nothing. They had not had their hair or beards trimmed for this long period, so that it looked

more like matted grass than human hair. And they stank—Lord how they stank! The air was a veritable nightmare.

But there was one small figure that emerged from the retreating crowd. He was a little Jewish boy, who came close to me and began questioning me in a very childish way. He asked about the flowers outside, telling how beautiful theirs were in the garden he had left, and then ran on to something else without waiting for me to answer him. He was hungry to have some one who would talk with him peacefully and without striking him.

For almost three full years the lad had been in this very room—all because he sought to evade military service. He had secured his single change and his only bit of fresh air by a weekly complaint of illness and a demand to be taken to the hospital for examination. Each time it was the same story—the perfunctory examination and a severe beating for his deception. Yet that was not too much to pay for the short walk in the open.

Most of the men were common criminals, with whom I never even tried to speak. A trio of them formed a group which I disliked from the very beginning. They were the three biggest and huskiest of all the ragged and half-naked creatures and preempted the one iron bed that stood in the corner of the cell, while the others had to sleep on the bare floor, using their skinny arms as pillows.

One of this vicious trio began walking up and down while I was talking to the little Jewish lad.

“Shut up, you scum!” he roared. I paid no atten-



tion to him but kept on talking. He gave the little fellow a kick in the ribs which drew a cry of pain from the frail youngster. My blood was up. I jumped to my feet and thrust my finger into the man's throat against his windpipe. At the same instant I sent the other fist to his jaw with all the force I could muster. He tried to reach my throat, but a well-placed kick in his stomach brought him down. Several of the guards opened the door to see what the trouble was, but did not interfere at all, merely looking on. The beastly creature was cursing me under his breath, as he pulled himself together and went back to his pals. We could easily see that they were planning something against us, so that the lad and I took turns at standing watch to prevent a sudden attack. The following day, as I was resting with my back to them, some one yelled:

"Look out!" Too late. I dodged, however, just quickly enough to avoid having my skull smashed with a piece of log, which one of them hurled at me. One end of it caught me on the shoulder, throwing me to the ground. I was up just in time to catch my assailant, as he rushed me, and tripped him, at the same time giving him a hard blow in the stomach, as he fell. The two others came on, but my small companion had just time to pass me a knife before they were on me. I pointed it menacingly at them and drove them toward the corner. There I formed the three of them in a triangle and forced the brutes with threats and pricks of the knife to slug one another. An old apache would have taken great joy out of seeing this application of one of their tricks.

They were soon fed up with fighting and after that we all lived quite harmoniously. On one occasion they even offered me some sugar and tea.

Aside from this adventure with these desperadoes and the personal misery, I look upon my sojourn in that cell as the greatest achievement of all my career as an artist. Finding bits of charcoal in the ashes of the fireplace, I commenced to convert some



of the wet spots on the walls into figures of dancing nymphs and then to combine them into a larger composition. When I had amused myself with covering the walls in this manner, I was about to rub them off for fear the guards would make trouble over it, when my fellow-immates vigorously protested against it.

"What are you doing? Leave them there! They are ours now," several of them called out, as they pushed me away. At this moment and in these surroundings I had the positive and satisfying proof that art is a necessity and not a mere luxury. In

recognition of my work, I received the greatest honor that could be accorded an inmate of that cell—I was allowed to sit down on the bed!

My little Jewish lad now looked up to me more than ever. Yet he began to get on my nerves with his endless questions, so silly in such surroundings.

“What would you like to eat? Goose or chicken? Do you like wine, honey and jam?” and so on, rambling on, I thought, in a demented way not to be wondered at after three years of this misery. He was so much like a fawning puppy that I could not be cross with him. Then he would add:

“It will come. You will see.”

One night he even woke me up with telling me the food had come. Half asleep, I scolded him in my irritation.

“No, just feel of it! Take it in your hands!” And I found him putting my hand somewhere—into a basket, and there was a real roast goose! He made me eat and then gave me more, while he himself just sat and watched, for the poor lad had almost lost his appetite, strange as it may seem, through these years of imprisonment. There were cookies, honey, delicious heavy, sweet wine, eggs in quantity, *pâté de foie gras* and cigars. He did not smoke himself but had even asked for these in the note he had been able to smuggle to his people the more to please me. I ate until I could hold no more. Then we hid what remained in the corner behind us, because the basket had to be out of the cell by morning, so that no trouble could come to the guards.

It was a real miracle! As we ate, the boy told me

we should now have all we wanted, because his relatives had succeeded in bribing one of the guards to bring us food at frequent intervals.

The morning after this wonderful spread I was again hauled before the military tribunal. In a sort of area-way I was waiting under the guard of three soldiers. The door of a kitchen opened and an attractive young Russian woman, engaged in whipping some cream in a bowl, passed before it. When she saw me, she stopped and looked in what was to me inexplicable surprise. She put the bowl down and disappeared. After a very short interval she was back and came toward me with a letter in her hand. As she offered it to me with a most gracious gesture, the *starshi* of my guard pushed her rudely back with the warning:

“Not allowed! Go away!” She turned red and showed her anger.

“You wait, you blockhead! I’ll have you fixed properly!” With that she went back inside and returned almost immediately with her brother, a young officer—she turned out to be the daughter of a colonel—who stepped up to the *starshi* and slapped him right and left with ringing blows. Then he turned and handed me the letter in a calm, quiet manner, saying:

“Here, comrade,” and walked away with his sister.

The hearing developed into a simple inquiry into my connections with Russians, which I disavowed, in order not to involve any one, as I had no secret relations with any among them. On my way back

to the cell, I drew the letter out of my pocket and opened it. A brand-new twenty-rouble bank-note tumbled out. The letter was written in French and ran:

Dear Friend:

We are full of sympathy for you in your undeserved ill-luck and it hurts us to see a man like you so ill-treated.

We hate all those who add to your misery and pray God may keep you safe.

Faithfully,

---

I was touched by such a noble manifestation of kindness and, having no other paper, replied on the reverse of her note:

Dear Mademoiselle:

Never was sympathy, so noble as this, more welcome. Don't hate any one, because they all act according to their natural desires and prejudices. As for the money, please keep it, for this is the only place on earth where it has no value. I thank you deeply.

Sincerely,

F. I.

The next time I was called to the tribunal I secured a chance to hand the letter to her. She was much disturbed about the money; but how could I accept it from a woman?

Then the commandant of the jail was changed. Daubek at once made his acquaintance and began talking with him about me. He sent for me and asked if I could make his picture. He was a young

peasant non-commissioned officer of very kindly disposition. When the sketch was done, he paid me seventy kopeks (thirty-five cents) and would not allow me to refuse it. Then he gave me a clean cell by myself and even had a genial fire made in it for me, after Daubek and I had spent most of the day in his room with him.

But I was not to enjoy it long. That evening at midnight an officer came rudely into my cell and shouted to me to "get up out of here."

"But where am I to go?"

"Go back to your barrack!"

"Let me stay here until the morning," I offered as a compromise, not wishing to go stumbling around through the snowstorm that was raging to find my quarters.

"No, go now and be quick about it!" So I was compelled to leave my jail and fellow-inmates behind, to go and break the seals which the gendarmes had placed on my door. I found that my room had been left with the window open and that all my ink and everything else was frozen, for it was now the end of October.

In the morning, bathed and shaven for the first time since I had left this room some four or five weeks before, I was sitting enjoying with unimaginable satisfaction a tête-à-tête breakfast with Philip-offsky. As I was telling him about the angry officer who literally threw me out of the jail, he remarked, laughing:

"You see, you are not fit even for a jail-bird." Then he told he how he had pestered the comman-

dant of the garrison the whole of the evening in the club to release me. Finally, about midnight, the colonel mellowed enough to answer him

“If I win this pool, you can take your prisoner.” They were playing their favorite game of *chemin de fer*. The commandant won and, fulfilling his promise, he telephoned to the officer in command of the provost guard to let me out immediately. No wonder he was so angry at being made to chase around in the dark after a miserable prisoner of war.

A month later Daubek, Legat and the others were conditionally pardoned and allowed out on their bonds to keep the peace.



## CHAPTER XIV

### WHEN THE STRINGS SNAPPED

**D**AUBEK had not, however, been well trained in keeping the peace through the years of his smuggling career before the war. It was early in December of 1915 that he was released from jail. One evening late in January I was sitting comfortably in my warm room, listening to a declaration of fealty and life allegiance from my trusted Joe. In associating his fate irrevocably with mine, he so far forgot his modesty as to warn me against indulging in any more foolhardy adventures, for now my responsibility was double—to care for his life as well as my own. His round, innocent-looking face was a great contrast to his huge frame and gorilla-like strength, as he stood there admonishing me.

With a more than childlike naïveté he came with such stories as that the Tsar had written to our Emperor and proposed sending us all home for Christmas.



"What do you think of that?" he asked in round-eyed wonder and expectancy of confirmation from me. My chief duty lay in disabusing him of his wonders and his scandals. While I was engaged in my usual good-natured lowering of his excitement barometer, some one knocked. It was Daubek, who indicated that he had something for my ear alone. As it was late, I sent Joe along and turned to Daubek with the question:

"What is it this time? I hope no fanciful escape is troubling your limited mind now?"

"Exactly that! I came to take from you all that I need for the journey—your black trousers and tan shoes; and where did you put your Chinese-Russian phrase-book?"

"What do you think, you idiotic monkey, that I would leave those things loose around here to be stolen?" I rejoined, in my attempt to show him that I kept such prized possessions locked in my chest.

"Now don't get so excited," he said, "I took the trousers and shoes this afternoon but could not find the book." To my chagrin I discovered that he was speaking the truth.

"I hope the hyenas leave them untouched after picking your bow legs clean." Under this exaggerated language lay a deep vein of sentiment for this good-natured, superlatively clever boy, who was always ready to help his fellow-man and to take big chances, if necessary, in another's behalf.

His versatility was unchartable. While he was in jail, he made friends with an old prisoner of long confinement, who had no coat and no covering to

protect him from the penetrating cold and damp of the night. One day, while being allowed to walk for a few minutes with some other prisoners in the yard back of the jail, Daubek managed to snatch a blanket from a line, fold it flat and get it under his greatcoat without being discovered by the guard. His delight in the gift to the old man was probably greater than the recipient's own.

He had also risen to the rank of professor in a very unique university that throve for a time within the prison-camp. The fear the Russian soldiers felt over going to the front and their desire to be captured at the earliest possible moment furnished the fundamental idea for the novel educational institution which the Russian officers later discovered. There were about fifteen thousand Russian soldiers in the barracks at one time. As many of these as could be enrolled were being instructed how to get into captivity with the least possible danger. Some of them even asked for letters of introduction which they could present on the other side of the line. Daubek, as one of the leading professors of this peculiar institution, once showed me a letter which he wrote for a former *starshî*, who was warmly hated by the prisoners. It ran:

"If this cowardly beast gets into your hands, don't forget that he made the life of your comrades miserable in prison." Although only a private, Daubek, to be surer of the result, signed himself as "Captain Kochs." Though it was his personal—not professorial—opinion that it would not be of great aid to the bearer, he considered it cheap at thirty kopeks.

When we became more serious and he told me that a party of seven of them were leaving for the south that very night and that he was the only one who had no money, I could not be less generous to him than he had constantly been toward others and so gave him fifty roubles to see him on his way, after all my protests against their attempting to travel in the dead of a Siberian winter had no effect in shaking his resolution.

Then he drew out the seven passports which he had forged for the party. His work on them passed credence. With pen and ink he had imitated an original printed script so cleverly that the naked eye could not detect the counterfeit. The seals were also copied in their exact colors, but he had been unable to think of any way to reproduce the water-marks in the paper. So he came to me for aid. He had brought a piece of paraffine wax, with which I copied the design of the imperial double-headed eagle and covered this with a thin sheet of unglazed paper. Over this we laid the passports and gently pressed them down with a hot iron. The impression came through much sharper than we had dared to hope—and the passports were “in order.”

While we were in the midst of this ticklish task, someone rudely burst in through the door we had so carelessly forgotten to lock. We turned and saw a frightful looking figure, with long, disheveled hair and bloodshot eyes, staring at us. He spoke in a strange voice, as though he had long known us:

“Oh, you are here? Do you know that we are eating human flesh? I just now saw and pulled out

of the soup a piece of a soldier's arm with his name and regiment tattooed on it. I saw it myself. They can't fool me." His loud talking brought the guard from whom he had escaped and who now roughly dragged him away. We learned afterwards that he was a captain of that fatal regiment which had turned its guns on its own units in the wood where the Austrian division commander committed suicide and the Russian general had his head blown off. This night of horror was the last thing the poor man remembered from his previous life and spoke of it frequently during his lucid moments. He had been a member of one of our best families and had married a countess.

Poor devil, he little knew what kind of a mess he came near getting us into, with our table covered with half-completed forged passports. With our work finished, Daubek said:

"Now let's go and see the others." They were hiding in the basement of an outside barrack, waiting for the sleighs that were to come for them in the early hours of the morning. They were all depressed and downhearted. Little wonder, with a snowstorm raging and the thermometer forty below zero. The darkness and the fear of detection only added to their agony. One very young officer lost his nerve completely and begged me to take him back with me, but his comrades kept him, practically by force.

When I returned to my room, I tried to read for a while, but I could not follow the text. My mind

was with that group of youngsters, especially with the one who had broken down. Why did I not keep him back? Why? This question has ever since tortured me. I lay sleepless for hours. The next morning, as Joe brought me my breakfast, he told me that there was an excited crowd around the near-by barrack, where some people had been killed. He did not know anything further. I pulled on my coat and hurried down.

It was a morning of intense cold and that frozen stillness which only Siberia knows. Everything was bathed in a steel blue, save where the sun laid on its yellow hues. As I hurried along toward the fatal barrack, I heard some one returning say, as he passed me:

“How ugly! Just like frozen chickens!” My mind was sickened—but in no way prepared for what I was to see. I breathed hard. No one in the edge of the crowd seemed to be saying anything that would help me, so I broke through ready to see Daubek and his companions fallen and still.

One glance and I turned back, sick and outraged beyond words to tell. There lay the bodies of two naked young women, covered with blood and frozen stiff.

The story that came out at the investigation was even worse than the sight itself. Two young officers, to keep from being sent to the front, lured these girls to a drunken orgy, killed them and pitched their bodies from the third-story window. What was more dastardly still, they planned it in advance!

Never before or since have I ever heard of a crime so low, so inconceivably beast-like as this of those two beings who wore the uniform of officers!

Sickened and outraged beyond expression by this act, I abandoned my separate quarters and my work that gave me closer contact with the Russian officers and went back to my companions in the prison barracks, where though there was misery and starvation, there was no inhuman cruelty.

In a way it was a relieving change for me, as I found that there was much that could be done to alleviate the condition of the men. First we edited a magazine, for which I wrote articles and made illustrations. Two copies of it were written, all by hand, and circulated among officers and men. Each of the officers who read it paid ten kopeks into a common fund for the men's kitchen, which did much more than one would imagine to improve the monotonous fare of the Tsar's guests.

We also formed a mutual Hungarian-culture committee, of which the president was a brilliant lawyer. The other members counted deputies, teachers, lawyers and literary men. One of our ex-deputies was a great opponent of war, saying that most of the wars of the world arose from the fact that we do not understand one another. He was among those of the committee who happened to be transferred the following year to Krasnoyarsk and was one of the first selected by the Czechs to be shot. Finally they shot all the rest—twenty in number—on the basis that it was an organization among their arch-enemies, the Hungarians. Some one had spied on the Czechs

and caused a loss of life among them. They blamed the prisoners for it. Later they discovered their mistake, but not soon enough to return to life these twenty men whose only offense had been their love of culture in surroundings where it was as dear to them as life itself. It proved dearer. The record of that Czech régime in Siberia will never be written, though it is engraved deep in the hearts of some of us who had to live through certain phases of it.

But hand-written magazines and lectures by members of a cultural society only interrupted momentarily the lethargy that had fallen upon the prisoners in those lengthening years of captivity. Occasionally something would occur to lift the human mass—then it would sink deeper toward the gulf of despair. A pall-like quiet would hang over a barrack, when suddenly some one would start a lively song. It would run through the place as though no one knew a care in the world. Laughter would follow, loud and boisterous. Then suddenly, the quiet would return, and it would be so still that the men feared it as a haunting monster.

By day they would sit on the roof of the barracks and gaze at the sky, giving to the clouds, their shapes and their hurrying, an importance like that of moving bodies of men in some great campaign of life. Then they would just stare—and go insane. The ward for the demented filled. It was the transfer to the ground floor of my barrack of the recent accretions to this that brought the poor captain to my door the night Daubek left.

And “lest we forget” that jaunty soul, I must

here add to the depressing record of those months of 1916 the fact that news came from the border patrol along the mountainous frontier south of Biisk that seven prisoners of war were found frozen to death in a shack twenty-two miles from the Mongolian line. It was Daubek and his friends—the Daubek for whom I had planned so much after the dismal war should close and we be repatriated.

One of the pinnacles of excitement during these Slough-of-Despond days came with the announcement of the first exchange of invalid prisoners. We all tried to prove our right to go. I had the best of instruction as to what to report to the examining Russian surgeon and how to act. The doctor's only comment, after taking my pulse and blood-pressure, was:

"I wish I had a heart like yours." That was poor consolation to me. All I could do was to invent ways to get letters home by the lucky ones chosen to go. I sank holes in cakes of soap, wrote reams with a fine-pointed drawing-pen on the thinnest of paper and put the closely-rolled scrolls into the soap or into the ends of Russian cigarettes, some of which were smokable and some were not, depending upon whether they carried the sign of the imperial post. Then I hollowed out crutches and found them almost worthy of a parcel-post.

I have still my mother's letter, telling of the reception of the invalid who acted as my postman and of his entertainment in her home for two days, during which he recounted to them every little detail of our prison life.



It was into this atmosphere that there walked one day a stranger from another world. It was a most refined, upstanding young American of courtly manners and speech, one Mr. Leonard, who represented himself as coming from some sort of organization which he called a Y. M. C. A. I was told that I had been selected by the prisoners to represent them and to be head of their building committee. When I asked what the society was supposed to do, they told me:

"Oh, they may be going to distribute Bibles or something like that."

When we found that the library did not consist solely of Bibles and that in the great cases which came for us were football, Carnation milk, cocoa, prunes, tomatoes and all sorts of paper and writing supplies, we formed a very different opinion of this new arrival in our midst. This Y. M. C. A. later proved a tremendous boon in our lives and was the only international organization, other than the Red Cross, that wrought any appreciable amelioration in our lot.

During these long months of confinement there slowly developed among us certain fixed types. One of these we called "the bluffer," a species that was quickest to manifest itself and quickest to be recognized by the crowd and set quietly aside in its niche by the irresistible weapons of the mass. Then there was "the pessimist," who found everything that we prisoners did to be wholly wrong and all that the Russians did to be quite right. "The prophet" figured close to the top of the list and had as his hallmark

the "I told you so" with which he labeled every event, after it had happened.

In contrast to these there were men in our ranks whose natures were so far from the boastful and the warlike that it seemed to me always one of the greatest crimes of the criminal war that these men should have had to be dragged through the inferno for which their nature and character had so ill prepared them. One of these was a Hungarian poet, who had



started life as a minister in the Calvinist Church but had found his expression lay more in the field of literature. While in prison he managed to write and send home verse under conditions of life which even his lively imagination could probably never have pictured.

The wells from which drinking-water was brought were two or three versts away from the camp. To see him struggling to climb and hold his place on the rising cone of ice that formed around the mouths of these wells in winter, long enough to lower his bucket and draw the water for his group so far away,

one would never have thought him the poet who was so honored at home.

When the senior officer among the prisoners, a German, forbade the wearing of the Hungarian cockade, he was so outraged by the order that he put his feelings into verse, which he called "The Cockade."

Later he received the good news that his poem had been honored by a prize of six thousand gold crowns from the Scientific Academy of Hungary. But the poor man had no benefit from this then-liberal sum. Mr. Gyoni died of typhoid fever shortly after receiving the news of his honor.



## CHAPTER XV

### REVOLUTION !

**T**IME had almost ceased to be. With no hope and practically no desires left, we did not know the date or the day, sometimes not even the hour—for meals ceased to have any attraction for us as such. When we grew hungry, we knew a long time must have passed for us to want to eat that monotonous food again. All privileges had been withdrawn.

It was the month of March, 1917. Evening had fallen. A group of us sat on a hill at the edge of the camp, from which we could look into the forest. We knew every tree and every object in the landscape. By force of habit we watched the baker placing bread in the big oven of the barrack below

us, though we had seen him go through the process so many times before that we could have closed our eyes and told at each moment what he was doing. Yet we sat and stared just the same.

There had been no mail for some days, so there was nothing to expect from returning to barracks: yet the cold was falling and drove us to our shelter. Then a German who worked in the post came hurrying into the room. He had news. Telegrams and proclamations had come.

"Revolution! Freedom! No more war! Away with war! . . . The Russian people did not make the war . . . They had nothing to say . . . They only fought . . . For what? . . . Died! . . . For whom? . . . Toiled unceasingly, only to bring home a loaf of black bread and some potatoes . . . And then only potatoes, no more bread, nothing but potatoes, death and famine!"

During the bitter years of 1915 and 1916 officers began to rise from the ranks—ranks of the uneducated and untrained—who brutalized and beat recruits, until they went shivering and cold to the front. Such a type was the commandant of the garrison at Beresovka, who dominated the lives of one hundred fifty thousand soldiers and one hundred thousand prisoners of war. He beat and kicked, shouted and cursed until he had no friends left and only fawning under-officers, who bent before his face but cursed him behind his back.

One day he met a recruit who had been sent to cut wood and was bringing in a log on his shoulder. With his hands holding the wood and hatchet, the

man did not salute his commandant. The officer called him to attention, ordered the wood off his shoulder and then struck him across the face. The soldier's cheeks were purple and puffed from having been frozen and spurted blood under the officer's blow. That blood was his death-warrant. The man grabbed his hatchet and chased the commandant to the very door of his office, where he came up with him and dealt him a single blow that smashed his skull.



The body lay for two days where it fell without a single person touching it. In this interval not an officer appeared. The recruits passed and commented, even with jests at times, on the end which the brute had brought upon himself. Then a little group of officers ventured to emerge and take the body in.

With that blow of the hatchet the drilling of eighty thousand recruits stopped. No word of revolution had yet gone out, but incidents of this character occurred at widely separated points and showed how ripe the country was for the change.

The assailant was then arrested, tried, shot and

buried in the common dumping-ground, where his grave was leveled; while the remains of the commandant were properly interred with a great ceremony of priests, brass bands and processions.

From that day forward things changed rapidly. Officers dared move only in groups and became very humble and quiet, just as the common soldier became correspondingly bold and impudent. For a few days everything was quiet, very quiet. Then came whisperings of something very important. Peace? No. What then? The news struck like a bolt of lightning.

"Rasputin dead," ran the word. Who was he? Nobody knew, but they did know that the imperial house of the Romanoffs was overthrown and the Tsar under arrest . . . "Petrograd seized by the army . . . The fortress of Peter and Paul was in the hands of the people . . . A provisional government . . . Freedom!"

Commissars were soon appointed, crafty middle-class fellows, who talked in lofty tones with childish impertinence and called every one "Tovarish (comrade)". Former rigorous defenders of the Tsarist régime hurried into the ranks and now wore the largest red cockades. This color now appeared everywhere. No opposition. Meetings on every street corner, with brass bands playing the Marseillaise. Everybody was happy. The cold winds of the early Siberian spring had blown the dark clouds of the past away.

With great ceremony the grave of the commandant's assailant was opened, the body exhumed and

reburied with military pomp and all the honor due to a martyr. Among those who knelt in homage were some of the very officers who had tried and condemned the man.

In Achinsk, as I sallied forth for the first time to see what revolution looked like close at hand, I first came across a group of about fifty soldiers, parading in their midst the former quartermaster of their regiment, barefooted, bareheaded, with his hands tied behind his back, his boots fastened by their tabs and slung over one shoulder and a piece of leather sticking out of his mouth. My companion of the moment told me that he had turned the last year's leather supply into cash for his own benefit. Now he was doing his penance.

Wishing to go further, I looked about for a droshky to drive me through the town. The coachman of a colonel was just passing with his former master's beautiful horses decked in their silver-trimmed harness. When I asked him where I could get a droshky, he replied:

"Jump in, *Tovarish*. I'll take you for half a rouble."

As I rode about in the elegant carriage, I mused over the vagaries of Nemesis that made the former proud officer go about on foot, while his servant drove his carriage on the streets for hire. On every corner there were orators, the majority of whom were women, whose haggard, pale faces showed the unmistakable marks of imprisonment and brutal treatment—the reward of free-thinkers of the past.

Near a crowded corner I was stopped and feared



the two men with red arm-bands might be planning to rough-handle me as the colonel in disguise. As the door of the victoria was opened, I discovered one was a former guard in the jail and the other had a familiar face. I was evidently among friends; but who could have recognized at first blush in the smoothshaven individual before me my little Jew companion of the jail?

"Come and eat with us, dear friend," he said, "and spend the whole day with us." I went with pleasure, and we had a marvelous time dining, chatting and going to the theater together. After the play we returned to his house for a late supper, during which he proposed that we go to the *sobrania* for the ball that was being given that night. But I had no pass to remain out of barracks the whole night. This was immediately remedied by the little Jew boy calling a husky fellow, with a cockade big in proportion to his size, and demanding a permit for me. They evidently wanted to recompense me in a single day for all that I had suffered in the past. Such was the spirit of those first hours of the new régime.

In the *sobrania* the evening's entertainment started, as did every gathering in those days, with a speech. This time the speaker was a gentle-faced old lady with very few teeth, who spoke in a quiet, unobtrusive manner. Her ideas came in poetical language, as she expressed the hope that the great mass of humanity that had now been loosed from its bonds in the world of darkness would rise up to see the light of freedom. As my little Jew guide told me that she had long been kept in Siberian prisons,

I asked if I might not meet her and hear the story of her experiences. He introduced me to her as she came down from the stage on her way to her room, which was located on the second floor of the *sobrania*.

She chatted with me for two or three minutes, as we walked along together. When she learned I was Hungarian, she immediately spoke with pleasure of having known of our Kossuth. As we approached the door of her room, she looked with surprise at the two armed soldiers who stood in the corridor.

"What are you doing here, my sons?" she asked of them.

"We are guarding you, that no one may do you harm."

"Gracious me," she answered. "I have been guarded for seventeen years, so that I could not hurt any one else; but this is the first time that any one has guarded me for my protection." And with that, she kissed the two of them, told them to follow her into her room and there picked up a short fur coat and handed it to one of them.

"If either of you can use this, take it," she said. They went out and immediately began a squabble over it that ended in a real fight between them. This had to be settled by a commissar who, with some Solomon-like bit of justice, gave it to one of them who had a vague claim of longer service or age on his side. In any case, a common soldier bore off that night the only thing which Babushka Breshkovskaya had to give, in the flood of emotion that

rose within her to greet her first guard of this type. I never saw her again, nor did I learn until many years had passed how widely known and deeply revered a figure she was in the history of the Russian people.

The next day the commissar, the friend of the little Jew boy and also, as I later learned, one of my fellow-inmates in jail, came to the camp to take me for another day of pleasure with them in the town. As we were passing Philipoffsky's house, I expressed the desire to go in and see my friend for a moment, curious to know what would be his reaction to all the rapid developments of these momentous days. Just as I was on the point of entering, the door opened and the commandant of the prison-camp was in the act of coming out. Seeing me, he stopped, pointed at me and said:

"You are out again! Thirty days strict arrest!" That meant bread and water under the old régime and sent pangs of regret up our spines. But just then my commissar-friend stepped in and asked what this fellow wanted of me. When I told him my sentence, he turned on the officer with:

"Thirty slaps on the face for you, you . . . ,” calling him names that were too vile to be repeated. "What are you doing interfering in my affair? You, commandant of the prison camp! We can remove you in a day, if we choose, you . . . ." More oaths, and the officer was allowed to pass on out.

"You are a clever bird," said Philipoffsky, when we were alone, "to have formed such immediate connections with the Reds."

"That is your fault," I retorted, "for your people put me in the jail and gave me the opportunity for contact with them."

"I know, I was just joking." As we turned to discuss the situation, he told me that regiments were to be formed of the *intelligentsia* all over Siberia to keep control of the populace.

"The *intelligentsia*? What can that mere handful of people do?" I asked with assumed surprise.

"You sarcastic devil!" he answered. And that was the last conversation I had with the sympathetic, courtly man who had befriended me and been my benefactor in so many ways, for I never saw him again.

After another wonderful day of that initial feast of freedom, I came back to the camp before dark, only to be arrested by order of the irritated commandant and placed in a barrack with a dirt floor and cut up into rooms by thin board partitions. Around me was bedlam, with wailing and moaning, sounds of fighting and screams and laughter mixed together in an incomprehensible jumble. Some were singing melancholy songs in deep, thundering tones. Then a voice came through the partition on one side of me:

"Do you hear those nuts next to you?"

"Yes, who are they?"

"Oh, they are a bunch of crazy madmen. There are some who think they are beset by wild beasts, others by Christ. They rave the whole night through. I can't stand it any longer." He was quite right, as

we could not sleep at all with the increasing uproar.

Early in the morning there was a knock on my opposite wall.

"Who is there?" I whispered through a crack.

"It's I, the inventor," and at the same time he slipped through the crack a drawing of the sun, a clock, a revolver and dozens of other intelligible and unintelligible figures, numbered and jumbled together. Looking over the crazy sheet, I asked him:

"Inventor of what?"

"Ah, don't tell any one, I have here a five-hour clock which will make the day shorter." Poor fellow, in his dementia he realized how much we all needed a fairy wand or other magic instrument to shorten those days of confinement!

Later on I also discovered that I knew my neighbor on the left. He was the one who always acted the clown for us in our games of football and other gatherings. The next morning I was awakened by the noise of tramping feet and hoarse voices in the corridor. I looked out of the peephole in my door to see them carrying away the body of the clown. Shortly afterwards my cell was opened, and in strode several commissars.

"Out of this! You are free." I actually ran from that dreadful hall, ran until I was out of breath. I went to my commissar and told him what had happened. He started at once on the trail of that commandant who had taken revenge upon me. But he could not be found anywhere. The tables had turned

and made him the hunted beast such as we ourselves had been but a few days before.

Our freedom had come at the price of the life of our poor clown, who had been driven by the nerve-racking tortures of the insane around him into committing suicide. His case induced the commissars to empty the whole place of all the sane prisoners. His funeral was the only one I remember, where every man at the camp turned out to pay his respects to the dead.



From now on each day had some new thrill or disclosure to mark it, and life was shot through by an electricity of expectation and suspense. Among the prisoners there was a meek, modest, clumsy Slovak, who appeared before one of the commissars and disclosed his identity as a Russian. This ignorant and harmless-looking fellow worked one of the most amazing tricks that I have ever heard being performed on a field of battle. He told some of us later what he had said to the commissar.

“To fight for the Tsar? Never such a foolish thing. To go into captivity? Well, it may turn out well; but, even so, they will take me far away from

my home for years, maybe. So I took the uniform of a fallen Austrian soldier and went back to the regiment next my own, where no one would know me, and there I 'surrendered.' "

Knowing Siberia well, he managed to ferret his way into a transport for Achinsk and there lived all this time near enough to his own village to go for frequent visits to his home and his wife. Then he got work there or in Achinsk and found the prison-camp surroundings so agreeable that he chose to remain instead of just melting away into the country. I thought it a rather definite critique on what the life of some of the Siberian villages can be.

But I soon saw enough of the new trend of affairs to be ready to go back to something more constructive in our own prison-camp life. From the Y. M. C. A. we received funds with which to begin a theater. We were given by the authorities one of the old barracks, which I converted into our amusement hall. I not only had to design the stage, decorate the room and paint the scenery, but then also to recall the plays from home and write the lines for the actors. This done, I became the director and producer.

We had help from all sides, some of it of doubtful source. One of our men, a barber from Budapest, made us very clever wigs out of dyed hemp, which we secured from rope. A merry-go-round owner, evidently skilled in the art of acquiring that which he needed in his travels from town to town, came in one day with a box which he thought might be of use to us in making up our characters. We found

it contained face-paint, make-up sticks and other supplies of the sort, even a selection of combs. When questioned as to where he had found all these things, he admitted that he thought the actors at the *sobrania* had really not so pressing a need of them as we had.

With our large number of prisoners to draw upon, we not only had a talented cast for our plays and musical comedies but also a really fine orchestra of eighteen pieces, who made such a reputation for themselves that the Russians engaged them for evenings at the *sobrania* and paid them ten roubles each. A musical-instrument maker fashioned violins for us, while we had to depend upon my design and a cabinet-maker to produce a bass viol. But it played, and we were nothing in those days if not pragmatists.

In my own world of sketching I had even to make my brushes and resorted to many tricks to secure paints. A pharmacist among us leagued himself with me in the search. For carmine he brought me rouge, which we worked into cakes with gum arabic. Tooth-powder became temporarily our only source of white. For blue he used a base of a very expensive French face-powder, put it into a tube and treated it with cobalt oxide gas, bringing out a good cobalt blue. He also manufactured a yellow for me somehow, from what I never knew.

Like so many of our men, he came to a most unfortunate end. He was a young Hungarian Jew and, after the Reds came into power, was lifted to the giddy height of commissar of all Achinsk. When the Whites recaptured the place, he was found with



too great a quantity of funds in his possession, investigated and shot.

By the end of the summer the theater began to present problems that were not to my liking, as it became the meeting-place of a clique of Austrian radicals who had gained the upper hand in the control. They began bringing in many of the political prisoners who had been freed by the Kerensky régime and thus introduced an element of political agitation that proved very distasteful. So I looked about for other employment.

Owing to the great number of cases of incendiarism in the town, the fire-department was searching about for additional hands. So I enrolled with three of my friends to fight fires. It proved a very agreeable occupation, as we had the whole day free. I sketched as much as I pleased and took great pleasure in the liberal ration of food we received. Rated as first-class workers, we had ample supplies of macaroni, sugar, flour, bacon, butter and eggs issued us and could buy peanuts, raisins and other luxuries in abundance. A favorite dish with our weekly allowance of four pounds of macaroni apiece was "macaroni with nuts," which we prepared by sprinkling the well-boiled pâtes with crushed walnuts and sugar.

The popular hour for fires was between six and midnight, as a large percentage of the blazes were started by intoxicated men knocking over oil lamps. To my surprise the fire-department employees proved very efficient and clever in combating the flames in those wooden Siberian houses which made such won-

derful tinder. The water was carried in large barrels on carts drawn by single horses and was brought from the river. We had twelve of these, so that when the fire was far from the stream the supply was apt to be intermittent. The force was produced by a hand pump, usually manned by a single fireman on each side, aided by the public, even children at times taking their turns.

Then there was a separate unit of six of us, who had a supply of asbestos sheets, some twenty feet square, which we used to set up between the burning building and those adjoining it. In this way we could construct a fire-screen about fifty feet long. When sprinkled occasionally, it acted as a most effective guard.

At one fire I had the good fortune to fall into a basement and incidentally to discover a large cache of rubber goods. As the secret hoarding of merchandise was forbidden, I received a reward of ten roubles for uncovering it. On another occasion, when we entered a burning house, we found an old woman seated in the kitchen and apparently not minded to move. As we sought to pick her up, chair and all, we could hardly lift her and had to call for more help. Once outside and out of danger, we found the unusual weight came from the supply of gold bars she had hidden in her bodice and under her dress.

Then came the order of the Kerensky government to reduce to fifty kopeks a day the pay of all prisoners of war who worked. Inasmuch as we were receiving six roubles at the time and these had depreciated in purchasing value to about one fifth of

their former worth, a general decision was taken by all the prisoners to withdraw to the camp. On the very next day I met Legat and found he had taken a position as teacher in the girls' high school and accepted his offer to place me there also. I consequently found myself metamorphosed in twenty-four hours from fire-fighter to an instructor of young ladies in clay modeling and design. But this did not last long. In only a week the whole camp was ordered evacuated to Beresovka, on the other side of Lake Baikal, just near Verkhne Udinsk. It was on that journey of five days that we came into unwelcome contact with some of the *frontoviki*, or soldiers who had returned from the front. A group of them had been set to guard us and showed their authority by snatching some of the new shirts and other articles which we had been given by the Red Cross.

One German soldier, a man of some years, was so incensed at losing a garment that he hit the thief over the nose with his teapot and cut the man's face. Although we gave him an Austrian uniform and did everything else we could to hide him, an investigating officer helped the injured Russian to find him out and had the poor fellow beaten to death by the men's rifles right there before our eyes. And we could do nothing but just stare!

When we arrived at Beresovka, we found ourselves in the largest and best organized camp in Siberia. It then had forty thousand prisoners. There had previously been as high as one hundred fifty thousand "in residence." In each barrack was a coffee counter, where one could have a cup of coffee

for the equivalent of half a cent, and a small shop that sold us cigarettes and other articles brought in from China across the Mongolian desert.

There were many distinguished men among the prisoners—something over forty university professors alone. But best of all were the many friends from home and from the front whom I found there. As we marched in from the train, all the old inmates were lined up to watch for familiar faces. Some one



called my name, and in a minute I was in the arms of one of the dearest friends of our family. How strange a meeting in that distant place!

But, on the other hand, we arrived there just as the worst period of the revolution was approaching. The desperate masses of deserters, hungry and bestial, were ready to plunder and rob in order to get food—and revenge. They were floating about on the roads and even in the camps. One could plainly see written on their brutal faces the determination to kill. With the arrival of the *frontoviki* December

saw the beginning of the most primitively brutish struggle one's fantasy could ever imagine. They poured out from every train, dropping down before it had ceased moving and rushing hungrily to the nearest shop, pushing madly over one another. If they found it closed, they simply smashed in the door and grabbed whatever was on the shelves. Those on the floor snatched from the hands of others on the counters, only to lose what they had to some one outside the door who proved himself the stronger. They stuffed into their mouths or hid in their clothes what they could, while any one of a dozen in the milling crowd was ready to strike them down for a bit of bread or any other visible food. Wolves over a fallen prey were never more beast-like. The disappointed attacked their more fortunate comrades out of sheer rage.

When they finished their search, it was usual to see them dragging screaming women to the train to subject them to the worst of human cruelty, many times killing their poor victims or passing them out of the train just human masses of suffering.

If a well-dressed person, especially an officer, came within their range of vision and was not quick enough to escape them, he was mercilessly massacred. Such sights became so common that we no longer paid any attention to their pillaging, at least unless a comrade was in danger. The most cowardly of the beasts chose the night for their operations.

In the camp there were about forty log-built warehouses, in which the officers who had gone to the front had stored their personal belongings and

furniture, and privates the chests containing their extra possessions. Nightly these were broken into and then burned by the crime-maddened hordes. Even those who went to fight the fires were robbed of their clothes.

It was an almost impossible task for any of us to go out to work. Even more dangerous was it to attempt to go shopping. The *frontoviki* followed purchasers into the few shops that were still open, grabbed the money or goods out of their hands and walked boldly away. For us this spelled disaster, as the food in this camp was simply unimaginable. A warehouse had been left full of frozen fish from the previous winter. During the summer these had naturally become rotten. They froze again in the autumn and were now being chopped off in great masses and thrown into kettles to be cooked for us as *food*. They filled the whole place with an odor that will never be forgotten. Beside this we had only half a pound of black bread per day, no *kasha*, no soup, nothing.

With the last rouble we possessed in the family, some went out to attempt a few purchases despite the danger. They came back bleeding and without either money or provisions. Though no one phrased it, we all knew that this spelled the dissolution of our family. Although our little group, brought together for self-defense, had been several times reorganized to make up for those who had been transferred or died, it had always been possible to carry on the basic idea with new individuals. The one who had been able to make money had been the father

and had supported the others. The chef was the most important member, and his task—well it was quite different from that of his colleagues at the Ritz or the Savoy. All they have to do is to taste the food to see that it is properly prepared, while he had a rôle of indescribable versatility to play.

In the days of his efficiency at Achinsk, he stole out late in the evening to a certain place where there was a hole burrowed under the fence, waited until he heard a whistle outside and then, if there was snow on the ground, covered himself with a white sheet and crawled out. Under the very nose of the guard in a tower near by, he worked his way carefully along to where the purveyor to our royal family waited with a sack. This he dragged back under the sheet. Then we had potatoes for a week. Another night a package would be tossed over the fence into the deep snow. That gave us meat for three days.

His ingenious tricks for passing the guards were limitless. Sometimes he smuggled legs of lamb in the barrels of drinking water that were brought in. On another occasion he would simply hire a coffin and make four sad-looking prisoners carry in the case well filled with food stuffs. The Russian soldier at the gate would bow and make the sign of the Cross to our bacon and lard, as they passed by.

Another member of the family made himself responsible for the wood supply. A third was the dishwasher. In view of our equipment of Delft and Limoges, any one can readily understand that this post was pure political graft.

And now, under these impossible conditions at Beresovka, this organization of close comradeship had to be dissolved. To go out to Verkhne Udinsk, twelve versts away, to look for a job was simply flirting with death. The *frontoviki* were ranging the town like wild beasts. However, necessity was stronger than circumstances.

Pifi, the bad boy of the family, was the first to secure work. His initial attempt was a flat failure, as the commissar's family, where he signed on as cook, would not accept his breaded fried fish with the scales still on. Similarly unsuccessful was his second attempt three days later as a baker, because he forgot to put the yeast in a big batch of dough. But however unsuccessful he proved as a worker, he made up for it as a raconteur, telling us of his experiences until we roared with laughter. And for me he did even better, in that he brought back two commissions—the first to make a sign for a butcher at a cost of fifteen pounds of sausage and the second to design a banknote for the local commissar.

“And I’ve even brought you the paints you need,” Pifi remarked, as he delivered me the man’s instructions. Then he managed to collect three hundred roubles as my fee for designing the notes.

With so much money to risk keeping, we took what seemed the lesser hazard of going to Verkhne Udinsk to shop for a coat or the material to make one. After finding nothing by hours of searching, we finally stopped in front of what had been a Chinese opium-den, where a man was folding up some blankets. Why not one of them? But at first



he did not want to sell. Finally we persuaded him to part with one for two hundred of my roubles. With two young prisoners I worked for a fortnight, designing, cutting and sewing. We attached a collar of Siberian pony and called our work done.

It was the very next day that a friend in the office of the camp secured for me a position as theater builder and scenery painter at Petrovsky-Zavod, some distance to the east. So I went into the town to buy some small articles for my kit and journey. I had just finished my purchasing and was turning homeward, when a lonely *frontovik* confronted me, revolver in hand, and demanded my coat. Just imagine, my nice new garment, for which I had gone to so much trouble, being taken from me on its first outing.

"Come to the next alley, *Tovarish*," I said. "Here in the main street every one will see you." And the fool followed me. Turning the corner, I suddenly kicked and tripped him, so that he fell. I grabbed the revolver from his hand and hit him a blow over the head, starting immediately to run—but too late! Several similar-looking fellows had seen me strike him and were now hot on my trail.

I crossed the street, running at top speed with a growing crowd of them at my heels. I was about to turn and face them, revolver in hand, when suddenly a sleigh drove up.

"Jump in quick!" shouted a familiar voice. Without a second's hesitation I dove head first into the sleigh. The driver whipped up his horses and kept them galloping, until we were well over the knolls

outside the town. All of a sudden over we went in the snow. As I picked myself up gingerly, my rescuer laughingly remarked:

"Well, we gave the wolves a run for their coat!" As I looked into his smiling face, I found the coachman to be none other than my friend, the Hungarian actor from our theater group in Achinsk. He had seen the whole affair and driven to my rescue. We righted our sleigh and, after picking my things up



out of the snow, were soon jogging along back to the camp.

The following day I was off for Petrovsky-Zavod. The train was filled with desperate *frontoviki*. They were fairly quiet, except that they threatened me for my cigarettes. In front of me sat a family, an aged man, his wife and two pretty daughters, one about twenty and the other not more than six. They huddled close to one another, evidently in great fear, as they were a constant target for the coarse and filthy gibes of the soldiers. Of the many ruffians constantly passing through the train, one suddenly stopped before the old man and bawled at him:

"Oh, Ivan Alexandrovich, you here?" and let loose at him such a flood of abuse as only a Russian peasant is master of. Then he explained in an excited manner to his audience of soldiers that the old man was a former colonel, who had many times severely punished him.

"He should have been shot long ago, but I guess they missed the skunk," he snarled, with a string of oaths that made of his speech a very different matter from my charitable translation of it. At this the women began to cry, while the filthy, unkempt brutes stared at the girl with greedy, lustful eyes.

"What a little peach! Just what we want!" continued the soldier, as the ring of wild, ugly faces back of him broke into guffaws of coarse laughter. That was too much for me, I jumped up on the seat and shouted at them:

"Comrades, you are all revolutionists, aren't you?"

"Sure, *Tovarish!* Who are you?"

"Never mind who I am," I yelled above their noise. "If you are all revolutionists, where are your rifles? Or are you counted as turncoats?" No one uttered a sound.

"Out at the next military station, all of you," I went boldly on, seeing I had gained my first point, "and explain the loss of your rifles! If your excuses are reasonable, you may get new ones; if not, you know what you'll get!" I had just read in the paper the warning of the revolutionary committee that the soldiers must not lose or dispose of their rifles. If they did, they would be counted traitors. From

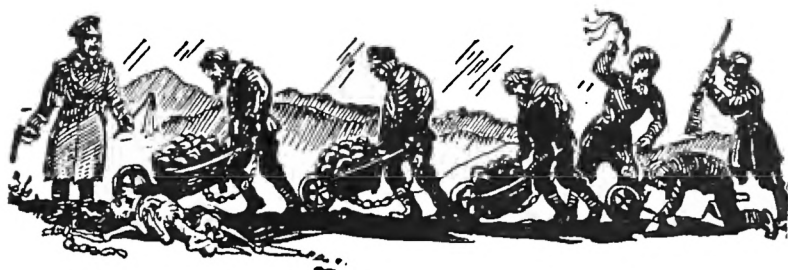
then on they became cowed and quiet and did not even dare to leave the train at the next station, for fear I would report them.

I went out and bought some bread and secured boiling water for the family to make their tea, and left them when the train arrived at Petrovsky-Zavod with somewhat better relations established between them and their *frontoviki* traveling-companions.

In the station I ran across some Hungarian prisoners of war, who took me to the quartermaster's department, where I found a member of my own regiment and another very dear friend from home. The latter was now the leader of a Hungarian orchestra which played in the railway and the town *sobrania* twice a week. They told me that I had come to the right place this time, as there were no military authorities or bullies to contend with. I felt relieved and really gay for the first time in long months.

I soon learned that Petrovsky-Zavod was a town with a most sinister history. It had been founded by a royal exile, Prince Petrovsky, a close relative of the Tsar. That was some hundred fifty years ago. It was to this place that one historic group of exiles came with only sixty out of the original six hundred still alive after the rigors of the long march from St. Petersburg. It became thereafter the most frightful hell for political prisoners. Although everything now looked quiet and peaceful, during the past years of the town's life the poor devils of prisoners were chained to wheelbarrows and made to push loads of iron ore for forty versts from the mines to the

furnaces that stood on the lake shore near the town. Neither snowstorms, pitch-black nights nor terrific squalls stopped this awful procession, which continued night and day up to the beginning of the war. When a man collapsed from exhaustion, he was beaten mercilessly by the guards to be sure that he was dead. Then they carried him, chains and all,



to the nearest ditch and threw him into it. I myself saw many skeletons along that calvary still held captive by their rusty chains. Afterward a Red commissar ordered that they be collected and buried in a common grave. This is the sole instance that has ever come to my knowledge of the war accomplishing any good. Here it served as a real liberator of man.

But all of this came to me only later. The very first day I saw the commissar of the steel mills, who was to be my chief, and received his instructions about the theater. This was the large common meeting room in the town *sobrania*, which had last been decorated by a Japanese prisoner of war during the Russo-Japanese struggle. Incidentally, I told them, when I had finished the work, that now they had their theater put in order until the next war.

First I had to raise the sagging ceiling by means

of long iron bars that were dropped from the roof timbers and then set to work on the decoration of the walls. I had many offers of help from fellow-prisoners, who had been some time in the town. Among other urban touches, we gave the stage its first equipment of footlights, made of oil lamps set in front of a long reflector of brilliant sheet-metal. After that I prepared a set for the play which was to be given just five days after my arrival on the scene. It was boyar garden with house and balcony. As I had to work almost all through the nights to finish in so short a time, the commissar of the mills had his servant bring me tea and cakes at any hour I chose to call for them.

Then came the play, and I had to serve as makeup man for all the cast. For this they gave me five roubles extra.

But one morning, before the set was finished, there came a tragic interruption that gives a clear picture of the wild life of this wild place. While I was painting, a prisoner came running in and told me that we were all ordered to line up in the mill yard to give the commissar of police a chance to find the murderer of the general contractor who furnished everything for the mills.

The bloodhounds had already been taken to the scene of the crime and were to run down the scent to whatever point it carried them. Though I had a perfect alibi, I could not but go, as absence would have immediately thrown me under suspicion. We were lined up in four or five rows, with the prisoners in the front ranks and the Russian laborers behind.

Soon the men arrived with the bloodhounds in leash. I felt most uneasy, as I knew that if those hounds should pick out one of the prisoners, we were all as good as doomed.

The beasts lunged and strained at their leashes, eager to pounce on the guilty one. And it did not take them long. The moment they were free, they ran barking up and down, springing through the ranks, even knocking some men down in their mad rush to get at the murderer. They were on him. A husky fellow in the last row started to scream.

"Oh God! Get them off me! . . . I did it! I did it! . . . Take them away! They will kill me!" With a yell of delight two commissars and the master of the dogs plunged through the rows of frightened prisoners and workers, secured the snarling hounds and dragged forth the murderer, Ribinoff, trusted servant and helper of the dead man.

"So you are the murderer, Ribinoff?"

"Yes," came the answer, very calmly, almost frigidly. "Yes I did it. He was cruel to me. Why did he always call me *posselenyets* (exile)? I told him there is freedom now, that now we have the revolution; but he kept on calling me *posselenyets*. This morning . . . well . . . I did not feel like doing anything. He again called me *posselenyets*, and I grabbed the hatchet and hit him over the head.

"'Ivan Ivanovich, what are you doing?' he asked me desperately.

"'Ah, you have learned all of a sudden to pronounce my name, after these eighteen years I have spent with you,' I answered him. 'How do you

like that?" I struck again, but he never answered. Then came his wife and the kids. I hate crying kids, I hit them all . . . until . . . none was . . . crying . . . around . . . me. Oh, oh Christ! I did it . . ." the man added almost in a whisper. "I killed them!"

He was led away. Later, after expressing his wish to join the Red army, he was allowed to go free. A few days after that, as I was standing by the side of the road near the station, talking with a comrade, he pointed to a passing figure, carrying a machine-part on his great broad shoulders, and said to me:

"Look! That is the murderer." He had no more than said it, before a man appeared and started chasing the great hulk of a fellow. It was the murdered man's brother. He ran very fast, as Vengeance had lent him wings. He carried an iron bar in his hand. When he was close behind the murderer, who was just approaching a little bridge at the foot of a slope in the road, the Red soldier threw back his head to look and was in the act of tossing the burden from his shoulder; but it was too late. The bar fell . . . again and again. It was too much for me. I turned away.

Following these interruptions by the abnormal life of the country, I finished the preparations for the presentation of the local amateur dramatic society's first piece, "The False Wife." After the play the commissar, in chatting over the evening's success, suggested that I ought not to content myself with remaining in so small and unimportant a place as Petrovsky-Zavod but should rather search out a posi-



tion in the university in Irkutsk. When he promised a few days later to give me a railroad-ticket, letters of introduction and addresses. So I was once more consequently, the more surprised when he sent for me full support and official assistance, I accepted all he said as mere pleasantries of conversation and was, on the move.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FAR FROM THE END

AS my dominating idea and thought through all these months and years had been to escape, I looked upon the commissar's assistance as a possible godsend. During the first period my single aim had been to go home. This had now changed to the idea "get away from here," so that I was more than ready to move westward. Constant inquiries and a gathering bulk of information convinced me that the Mongolian route was fraught with too great danger to be a desirable chance. Subsequent developments proved this quite correct, as the number who succeeded in getting through was proportionately very small.

In Irkutsk my first thought was to secure permission and a passport to move freely wherever I would. But the Red intelligence-units opposed every order they did not like and, as they were threatened to be disarmed by the army leaders, they formed junker battalions and fought openly in the streets for several weeks. As I arrived, the fight reached its peak. That was the beginning of the civil war, which followed the first phase of revolution. These battalions were not wholly Red but included former

Tsarist officers, students and members of the middle class.

This was in the first months of 1918. The Bolsheviks were definitely gaining the upper hand everywhere. Strange things occurred in those days. At the Irkutsk station I saw a Hungarian soldier in Red uniform and asked him where his commissar was. He pointed out a small man, whom I immediately recognized as a Hungarian Gypsy and who proved to be most affable, telling me I could go wherever I chose.

It was interesting to see the way the Reds were beginning to enlist war prisoners in their ranks. They reached them in divers ways. It was a fact that the Hungarians were the only prisoners throughout the whole war, so far as I have ever been able to learn, who were not allowed to correspond in their own language, because there were not enough who understood our tongue to act as censors. The Reds played upon this and the ready support of many of the Austrian radicals to enlist thousands, promising the good ration of the Red soldier and five roubles a day. These Hungarians, I regret to say, became some of the fiercest fighters in the Red army.

When the commissars found that they could not reach the educated and less radical among the prisoners, they worked another trick by forming a Red guard for the prison-camp, into which they took men at four roubles per day and promised them comparative ease of service. But they made them take the oath just the same to support the Red

cause in the hour of danger. The guard was no more than well organized before it was entrained to fight Semenoff in the east and later the Czechs or the Whites under Kolchak.

The Red spirit ran through our men as wildly in some cases as through the Russians. One soldier came back to Achinsk with a great roll of bills and threw them down before his former captain, to whom he had been a servant. When the captain refused, the man simply drew his revolver on him and said:

"Why won't you take it? Not only you will, but you will come along and have coffee with me. Why are you so proud? I can kill you or put you in prison, if I want." So the captain had to accept the money and go and sit at table as the strange guest of his strange host.

At Beresovka one group came back to their starving friends who had not enlisted and swaggered among them with all sorts of questions. When had they had meat last? Oh, ages ago, it seemed. All right, there's a cow in that field, digging away the snow and eating the dried grass beneath it. We'll bring her to you and assume the responsibility for taking her. That was their attitude, and they did.

They did not even allow our officers to wear their insignia and insulted them right and left. In a way I wondered that roughly a third of the prisoners did remain in camp, inasmuch as the mental field had been so thoroughly prepared for the revolutionary movement. Starvation was constantly claiming victims, and under these circumstances food will buy almost anything.

The men who went to the army, even for the shortest periods, came back quite changed. The possession of a weapon again stirred all their bravado and desire for revenge for the sufferings they had been compelled to endure. Most of them felt that they would have to die somewhere in Siberia and they chose to have food and take their chances with the Red army rather than sit and face the gloomy specter stalking them in the helplessness of the prison camps.

These were the conditions that were ruling in the land, as I left Irkutsk, thinking that the only thing to do was to try to work westward out of the confusion that was making a hell of the country. Somewhere on this westward journey two young, intelligent Hungarians attached themselves to me, thinking my knowledge of Russian and of the country might give them a greater chance of life.

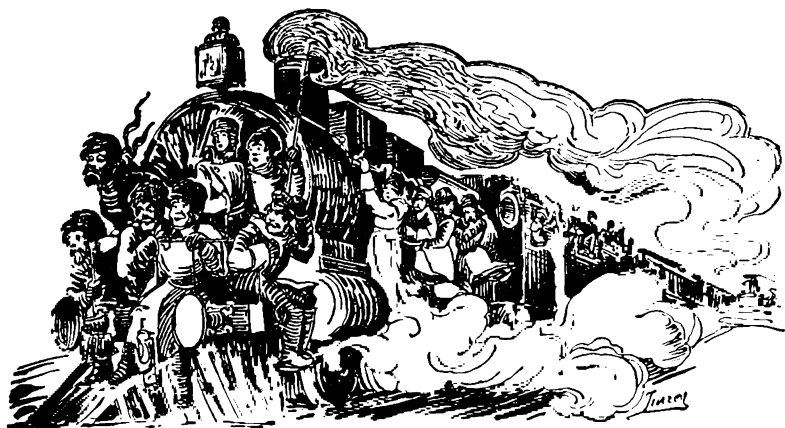
As far as Novo Nikolaievsk all went well, that is if you give the word a distinctly relative sense. We saw the most hopelessly miserable sights one could imagine. We passed towns and villages in flames. Flying bullets hit our train, killing one passenger in our very car. The train was even stopped from time to time on the road by bands of vagrant, hungry soldiers, who took everything of value that we had. We were without food for days, except occasionally when we would espy a woman at the station with bread or cakes, jump out, run to her, shove a forty-ruble note into her hand and take all we could stuff into our pockets or could carry.

But that was not the worst by any means.

Hunger is only a negative evil, whereas stench is a positive one. We had to sit upright all night on our wooden bench and never dared allow more than one to leave it at a time, as it would have been occupied in a second by some of the weary passengers who were standing. Above us on the upper bunk sat another row of Red soldiers, whose boots hung over the edge just on a level with our faces. Scrooge down as we would, we could not separate our noses far from those noisome feet. Any one who has traveled in Siberia in winter must know that the windows were frozen down, so that we could not possibly open them. For some time we discussed the advisability of breaking one and making it appear as an accident. The solution came, however, in another way.

At one of the stations some one shouted that there was hot soup for sale, and everybody ran. We joined the queue but were so long in securing our bowl of the only bit of hot food we had on the whole journey that we lost our places in the train. Not only were we forestalled in the matter of seats but even in the matter of entrance, for so many new travelers came on board here that we could not squeeze inside the door of a single car. So we packed ourselves on the steps of one carriage and held on to the hand-rail. What is more, there were so many others there also that we could get only one hand on the rail. With all our luggage on our backs in the form of our knapsacks, this method of traveling, even to persons as determined as we were to "go somewhere," was too exhausting to be indefinitely endured.

So at Novo Nikolaievsk we climbed up on top of the car, where we found the ventilator and stove pipes the only anchors to which we could tie ourselves against motion and wind. That proved so far from the luxury we were seeking that we worked forward and slid down on the coal in the locomotive-tender, whence we were finally driven to the bumpers by the engineer. By this time we were not alone. There were apparently swarms of men going



west, who had no better place-tickets than we had. Our next move took us to the very front of the train, on the engine-frame just above the cow-catcher. There we sat, alternately frozen by the biting wind and cold and given a Turkish bath by the escaping steam and the heat of the boiler, when we stopped or the wind fell. Our faces froze and cracked in the quick changes of temperature; still we kept on going with the certain knowledge of the places we were leaving and the willingness to try for better ones elsewhere.

But, to our dismay, conditions in European Russia turned out to be much worse than those in Siberia. Factories and stations were in flames. We saw many derailed trains. How heedless and wanton the killing had been was clearly shown by the number of peasant women shot down in the road. In some of the towns east of Moscow the streams of frozen blood on the streets were almost continuous.

Yet it remained for Moscow to top all this. There the fighting went forward on every floor from the ground to the roof of many of the most important buildings. What was more disturbing, no one among the half-crazed, running populace could give any account of who the participants were or what they fought for.

"Hell knows!" was the only answer, if they answered at all.

As we arrived late in the day, I started at once to search out the home of the Loleits to find Nadia and her father. So great was the confusion and the danger from the desperate street fighting that it took the whole evening for me to work my way to the Novo Bosmanyi. What a contrast and a shock! The house was dark, the windows broken with the curtains blowing out, the buildings next to it were gutted by fire and the whole street showed that it had gone through the awful baptism of civil war.

An old woman janitress told me that the General and his wife had been killed and Nadia taken off by a Red soldier. What were my feelings as I climbed the stairs to look out through the window where she had first signaled to me and afterward



sent so many girlish, happy messages to the unknown prisoners in her old classroom! The contrast was terrible. Then they had been so safe and so much more comfortable in this cozy room than I in my prison-hospital. Now they were killed and scattered to living deaths, while I, though far from leading a life of ease, was still alive and able to hope yet for something beyond the turmoil and carnage.

I passed a cold, dirty night in the basement of the next house, my mind incapable of working in the normal way. There was the noise of rats in the papers and rubbish, with cats occasionally coming to pursue them; then human voices, showing that I was not alone in this uncongenial shelter.

Tired and cold after my miserable night in the basement, I started out in the morning to try to find the Warsaw station but was soon halted by the rattle of machine-guns. I spied the heavy towers of St. Gregory, as I dived into a tea-room, crowded with frightened pedestrians who sought to escape the flying bullets.

"This is a most trying day," remarked a commissar in the packed crowd, "the cadets seem to be strong and the population is with them." When the firing quieted down a bit, I tried to get out of this hell, only to land in a worse inferno. I jumped over several White trenches, making my way without being stopped or notice taken of me.

As the machine-guns began barking again too threateningly, I shoved myself into the jammed door of a small shop just as a lad ran by whom I recognized as one of the members of our former family

at Achinsk. He squeezed in also, but it was impossible to make oneself heard in the roar of the shooting. We watched a group of Reds swing into the square just in front of us, throw up some paving stones for a barricade and begin firing. My young countryman pointed to a rather heavy Jew commissar, with a fairly long grayish beard, who was directing the attack and was himself firing a revolver so persistently that he had finally to put his left hand up to support the right. We could see in several cases that the young cadets who rushed the barricade went down before his shots. Now he was so hard pressed that he took out a second pistol and fired from both hands at point-blank range. The lads fell or were forced to run and, as the din quieted enough for my family-mate to make himself heard, he said: "That's Trotzky." I had heard and have since heard on several occasions that the Bolshevik chief was a pure idealist, who could not hurt any one. My acceptance of this estimate of the man was shaken by the "circumstantial" evidence to the contrary which came to me that day. He had, we found, opened the prisons and let out the most criminal types to join them in the fight against the Whites and cadets that were trying to hold the city against his forces. Also we learned that at this time the town was probably less than ten per cent Bolshevik but not prepared to resist the organized efforts of the Reds.

When I finally reached the Warsaw station, I found there were no trains running and so had no option but to work my way back around through

the suburbs, avoiding the fighting area, to the small station on the line to the east where rail traffic now stopped. Moscow had proved a complete failure as a channel of escape as well as a place where one could hope to live many days without having a machine-gun bullet through one's skull. Also Siberia now looked like a haven compared with this war-torn land.

Entering the train that was drawn up before the station and headed east, I tried to find out where it was going. No one knew definitely. Yet they seemed certain that it was not going to Petrograd nor to the south, so that I took the chance of Siberia being the destination and crawled up to one of the upper bunks, glad to have a place to lie down. I happened to be suffering at the moment from an excessively severe bout of sciatica, which made me indifferent and apathetic to a degree I had not known for a long time. Twice a railway official came in and ordered every one out of the train, as it was to be put on a sidetrack and not to go. I refused absolutely to move. I was too spent and preferred to lie right there and sleep, no matter where the car might happen to be going.

Finally it filled again, largely with peasant women, who chattered below me like a cagedful of magpies. Also there were three young recruits for the Red army. One of them began showing off with his rifle and fired it, accidentally wounding one of the women in the arm. Then bedlam broke loose! I thought I had heard swearing in Russia before, but it was nothing in comparison with what they

lavished upon that "making" for a soldier. They beat him over the head and finally sated their revenge by throwing him off the train, while some among them prevented the other two from helping him.

As the train headed out toward the east, I lay on my upper bunk and ruminated over the meaning of all I had seen. There is nothing more frightful than civil war. War itself is bad enough under any conditions, but there is at least an established battle-line, and behind that the population can live in some degree of security and peace. There are responsible leaders, Red Cross staff and general army orders that apprise one of the situation. The fight goes on between men with some parity of arms; but in a civil war every street is a battle-ground. The spy, the enemy is right in the home. There are no prisoners, no Red Cross. The struggle is waged for total annihilation. Armed bands go against unarmed, unorganized people, even women and children. In revolution there are no strategic plans. Instead, waves of emotional frenzy rule. No one knows what is going to happen. The confusion and uncertainty rob the masses of their common sense, giving them a constant fear for their lives that transforms them into merciless beasts, whenever occasion affords them opportunity to show their nature.

This beast-like quality exceeds the powers of the imagination not trained by the horrors of such a war. No more paralyzing example of it could have been found than in the *otrad*, or band of executioners, of Omsk. A contingent of this organization came

into my car, as we traveled through western Siberia. I could not but overhear their talk and had no escape from it.

"That priest was a hell of a fat pig! What a fuss he made before we shot! He was not eager to go to Heaven."

"That girl was not so bad," said another, with a low, vicious face. "She thought we wouldn't shoot her because she was with us last night."

Along the way there came into the car a much more welcome traveler in the person of a young countryman of mine who had also been wandering in European Russia and was heading back for Siberia. He proved a boon to me in bringing me hot water to make tea, when I was so miserable with my sciatica that I could hardly move. I shared with him the supply of bread, cakes and chocolate which I had purchased in Moscow and blessed him for his services.

A third Hungarian later joined our group—this time a Jew who had been a butcher at home and now was the head quartermaster-commissar of the Red army at Irkutsk. He had one hundred thousand roubles, the equivalent then of about fifteen thousand dollars, of which he wanted me to receive the half and give him an order on myself after we should be back in Hungary. Naturally I could not oblige him, but I did share with him his supply of delicious cold veal which his previous profession and his present opportunities enabled him to command.

On and on we continued, though at first it was thought that the train would not go further than

Ufa. In Irkutsk a stop of two days was necessary for repairs to the locomotive, as there were no others available. While this was going on, I managed to get about and went to the *Voyennogo Okruga*, or Red army district-headquarters, to secure permission to circulate in the region. Whom should I find there in conference with the commandant but the shoemaker for whom I had cut out French heels in Achinsk! He was now commissar-supervisor of the footwear of the army. His greeting was more than cordial.

"Oh, Mr. Imrey, what brings you here?"

"There are no 'Misters' here?" shouted the commandant. "Do you know this *Tovarish*?"

"Yes indeed, very well. He was always good to us. He was a professor in our school." And he added more that brought an unexpected and sudden result.

"All right," answered the commandant, "then you take command of the artillery around the Baikal." I had the feeling that all could not be exactly right with an army that secured their commanders in this manner. I consequently refused it modestly, telling them that I was an invalid and quite unfit for military service. Also I had seen so much of war and all its dwarfing horrors that I longed for the quiet of Petrovsky-Zavod and the entirely different character of work which I dreamed of finding in my old surroundings.

Once back, I was constantly questioned about Irkutsk and my doings while there. It was the one place of which I had learned little or nothing, yet I would not reveal to my well-disposed employers

the true history of the weeks I had spent away from the town. I simply maintained a puzzling silence and took up my new contract for seven different sets of scenery for the theater.

These were to encompass practically all the possible needs of their histrionic art—a garden in summer-time, the same in winter, then a “rich” room and a “poor” room, a peasant yard and a forest. This outfit served me well also, as I had two other theaters to do elsewhere after this and simply duplicated these sets as the normal equipment of a normal playhouse.

I am powerless to describe the joy that was mine in these days of quiet constructive work, and above all, the peace that came with life in a private family where room had been found for me. After the crudeness of barrack and train existence, the atmosphere of the little Siberian home was a veritable heaven. In the family were the dear old mother, *Mamasha*, so quiet and gentle in every word and movement, so deep a believer in the ultimate return of the Tsar to his throne and so anxious to do everything she could for me, for she was sure that my *Mamasha* was waiting for me to come back just as she was hoping for her own soldier-boy.

There was also a son of about twenty-five at home, who did little to make one hope another would come back. He occupied himself principally with taking what little money there ever was in the house and going to drink it up. Two little girls of eight and twelve completed the family. They were little slaveys. It made my heart sad to watch them in

their stunted life. The older one took the big wooden bucket and carried water up from the river, while the hulk of a brother never lifted a finger. I used to go down with her whenever I saw they needed water and talked with her about her school and other things. She was only in the second class.

The house was very simple, with four small rooms and only one bed, which *Mamasha* occupied. The rest of us slept on the floor of the outer room on thick



cotton quilts. The walls were papered with pictures from the magazines, not nearly so unpleasantly as one would think, though they were somewhat spoiled by the fierce photographs that shared honors with the papers. Then there were the inevitable ikons, one with the ever-burning oil-lamp before it, the round Russian stove, the bench by the wall and a table with two chairs.

Our food was daily the same, tea and *bliny*, or pancakes, for breakfast and cabbage soup and smoked fish with bread for dinner. I could not stand



the fish and so left my portion for them. In the evening there was again tea, a piece of the soup meat and bread. As I was listed as a "first-class" worker, the old lady received my ration from the Soviet committee and profited by it, since it was more than I could eat.

Having had so much care and kindness shown me by the little mother because of her feeling for her own son, who had not yet returned from the front, I looked forward to a very affecting meeting when he should appear. He had been an officer and was probably having a hard time to get through the Red lines. One morning Marusha came running in and told *Mamasha* that George Ivanovich was coming home. The little woman asked quietly:

"How do you know?"

"He is at the station now." Later the child was watching from the window and cried to her little sister:

"Oh, he has a new uniform on."

He came in with his coat and hat still on, and sat down in a chair, as one in a dazed lethargy. Without any apparent feeling, the mother asked:

"Oh, you are home? Are you wounded?" There was no embrace, no sign of emotion, nothing that I had so naturally expected. He answered without more than looking up.

"No, I'm all right."

"Would you like a glass of tea?"

"That would be a good idea." When little Marusha stood shyly by and awkwardly smiled at

him, as though to challenge him to take her in his arms and play with her, he only asked:

"Are you still studying your books?" I was amazed by the whole thing, the more so when I realized that this was their natural life. They had been cowed so long, through so many generations, both by their political conditions and by the severity of their long winters that they had learned to suppress all emotion. Only when evening came and the samovar was going did the real talk begin. Then the stories of the months of separation were told in a more lively way before the group of friends that assembled.

But it was the children, after all, who gave me the greatest surprise. After we had seen so much of hardship and slaughter, I was looking for something from the gentler side of life to help me blot out the pictures of terror. I was eager to love somebody, and who needed real affection more than those innocent little creatures? The Siberian children are the most undeveloped I have ever seen.

None of them start to walk until they are three or four years old, and the majority cannot talk until they reach the age of five or six. Children are often nursed by their mothers until they are three years old, or even more in some cases. No wonder that they took all my presents indifferently, almost stupidly. After I had played with them and taken care of them for months, they never got so far as to thank me for the toys, cookies and different presents that I brought them, or even to return my greetings. They had expressionless eyes and impressed one as being half-

idiots. In their play they were not sociable, romping in groups, but kept to themselves. Girls of eleven and twelve used such expressions to their own fathers as would be foul in the mouths of the worst of enemies.

What a contrast were the children of a refined Russian widow of a high officer who had been killed in the revolution! She had a post as ticket-seller at the station but was given by the committee only a single ration for herself, though she had an old mother and the little boy of four and a girl of six. She was always so refined, so quiet and undemonstrative, demanding nothing but simply doing her work and making the best of her lot, that some of us prisoners got together in a little meeting and decided that we would do everything possible to combat injustice in this special case. Each day some one of us, after our work was done, went to her house to carry water for them. Then we turned over to her part of our rations or the supplies we were allowed to buy with our cards. In this way I purchased oil and potatoes for them, another bought flour and butter, a third, salt and whatever articles happened to be on sale. One day there would be a load of onions brought in, another day apples and so on.

In the workshop we also cut out toys for the children, painted them and held most serious conferences over just what the colors should be and what other surprises we could manufacture. We were all very happy at having these delightful charges to care for and to be able to do something to fight the injustice of it all.

There was another case that came into my life at this time that was, however, of quite a different nature. I had as a pupil an ambitious Jewish boy of twenty, who was commissar of education at the 37th Razrezd, or Guardhouse, forty-five versts east along the railway. I taught him drawing. For every lesson he gave me a sheet of drawing-paper, the most valuable thing I could receive at that time. Although a commissar, he started to agitate openly in favor of the counter-revolutionist, Semenoff. He was arrested by the local authorities, tried before a Red court and sentenced to death. Strangely enough, amidst all the killings and terror that I witnessed or heard of in Siberia, this was the single instance that came to my notice of a formal Red tribunal sentencing any one to death. Nor was the result less unexpected. The commissar could find no one who would form the firing-squad to execute this boy, so that he had to be sent to Irkutsk, where he was summarily shot.

With his going his aged mother sent me all the stock of drawing-paper he had left. How sad it was that I should have received a plentiful supply of the treasured article at the cost of a poor lad's life!

It was during the early spring, while there was still much snow on the ground, that I was nearly executed myself in Petrovsky-Zavod. I was suffering from the sciatica which had tortured me during the long journey from Moscow and felt at times that I could not endure it further. Then one day Petroff, the half-stupid son of my landlady, told me he would cure me the next Friday, when the bath-

house would be heated and Yasha would be there to help him.

In these Siberian towns it is common for every three or four houses to have a bath-house in the back yard of one of them, which they usually heat once a week for all the household to use. The building is a simple one-room log house, with low ceiling and one or two small windows. The bath equipment is a stove built of brick, with a big iron basin, set and cemented in the top, for heating the water. Immediately in front of the fire-box is a large iron door, quite out of proportion to the size of the stove. The fire is started early in the morning, not only to prepare a plentiful supply of hot water but also to get the stove and the iron door piping hot, for the first is necessary to secure sufficient heat radiation, and the second to furnish the supply of steam. This they produce by dashing water against the door.

Along the side wall there are usually three shelves or bunks on which the person being bathed is supposed to lie. When the Friday on which Petroff was to cure me came round, I was taken into the hot room, the steam was generated, and I was put on the top shelf, where the heat is greatest. Usually I could not stand more than the lowest one, but this day I was in my doctor's hands and had to obey. He protected me by swathing my head in wet towels, leaving just a thin covering over the nose, which he kept dampened with cold water. He also wrapped up all my body save the one affected leg.

This he and Yasha splashed alternately with hot and cold water and then fell to beating it with lit-

tle bundles of twig switches. Nor did they stop when it became fiery red. They kept at it till the blood ran—then more hot and cold applications. Somewhere in the process I became semi-conscious and found myself coming to on the cold floor.

“That’s better than any *feldsher* can do for you. You’ll soon be all right,” was Petroff’s prosaic comment, as he helped me up—and he was right! The very next day I could bend down and put on my own shoes, which I had not been able to do for weeks. During those long months I had received the attention of several of our prominent doctors, not one of whom had been able to rival the sleepy Petroff.

With the passing of the spring there came through our little station many of the diplomatic trains that were carrying the embassy staffs away from Petrograd through Siberia, as the communication to the west had been cut. When the Belgian one arrived, I spoke with the Military Attaché and learned from him that the conditions in Russia were growing daily worse. This confirmed the information we prisoners were receiving from those who had gone west in search of work or the opportunity to escape.

On one of the trains I spied a very modestly dressed man who looked most familiar. He proved to be none other than my diplomat-friend from Petrograd, Count K——. He told me of the last days in the palace, of the taking of the Tsar and then, as the train was starting, bade me good-by with the disappointing words:

“I am sorry. Good luck to you. I hope you get out all right.” And the moving train took him away. He could so easily have offered me a place in it! I did not often let myself get out of hand, but that day I wanted to sit down and cry.



## CHAPTER XVII

### AN OASIS OF PEACE

IN this mood I began thinking of my "family" and all that their companionship had meant to me. I decided to make a trip back to the camp at Beresovka. I had saved a considerable amount of lard each week, so that now I had a firkin of about sixty pounds. This I decided to take back to the family for their kitchen. Whenever the chances had come, I had been forwarding them parcels from our better source of supplies and our greater affluence.

So I went along to the Soviet office to demand a passport, on the pretext of going to Verkhne Udinsk to buy paints. Elbowing my way through the crowd around the door, I entered the sanctuary. What a place! The floor was literally covered with a layer of sunflower-seed shells; the walls were dirty and spattered in places with blood; and a broken safe with the door open and the commissar's boots inside



it gave the final touch of disorder. Several officials sitting with their feet on the top of a richly carved desk and talking in loud, hoarse voices showed me what I had to contend with.

"What do you want, *Tovarish*?" the commissar asked me.

"I need a passport to go buy paints."

"Go over to the girl," he said, indicating a young Polish stenographer who sat typing in an adjoining room, "she will make it out for you."

She looked at me with surprise and said in low tones.

"Certainly, I'll give you a passport to get across the border, anything you want." Then she added in a whisper:

"Take me too."

"No, I can't do that," I answered, thinking rapidly, "it would be too dangerous. You certainly have some one who can protect you far better than a prisoner of war."

"Well, perhaps; but I've got to get out of this hole somehow." I bade her a friendly good-by and left.

That evening I met her in the *sobrania*. She immediately came over and whispered that she had my document ready.

"Can you fight, yes? Follow me out, when it is over." She sat down next to me on the wooden bench and was talking with me when a comrade of mine came along and whispered in my ear:

"Come outside a moment, I have something to say to you." Once beyond her hearing he said:

“For God’s sake, keep away from that girl. She is the *Liebling* of the station-master, who is a jealous brute that killed his wife. He has been watching you all evening.” No wonder she wanted to know if I could fight! When we re-entered, I avoided the girl; but, as we left, I felt that some one was following me. In the dark a man stepped forward with his face toward the light, so that I could see that it was the station-master. Suddenly I felt the point of a knife in my ribs. In the same second he growled at me:

“That woman with whom you were flirting is my wife.”

“I know she is. But who is flirting with her?”

“What is your business with her?”

“Didn’t she tell you? She is getting me a passport, so that I can skip out of this hole. Be decent and don’t squeal on me. You’ll get us into a peck of trouble.” The appeal to his secrecy turned the tables. He shook hands warmly and turned back. The next morning he came himself, bringing me the passport and telling me when the train would leave for Beresovka.

On the way I nearly lost my firkin of lard to a prying commissar. But when he found I was an artist and looked through my sketch-book, he accepted my story that the lard was what I had been able to save from my work and let me carry it through, although it was quite forbidden to move any merchandise privately. The family rejoiced in the lard, as I did over seeing them all again.

One day when I went into Verkhne Udinsk for

shopping, I found the place in turmoil. The Blacks, or anarchists, a new organization of armed bands, mostly mounted, who roamed the country at this time, had set free all the prisoners, even those put in by the Reds. They were terrorizing and looting the town. A part of the city was in flames, while at the very same moment there was a Red meeting



being held in the market-place with apparently no concern as to the fate of the buildings in the path of the fire. Here I witnessed the single act of open, audacious bravery during all these days of turmoil.

A Russian Cossack captain jumped up on the platform and began in thundering tones:

"You miserable cowards! You stinking scoundrels, you can burn a town but you can't build it up! But you just wait, you dirty dogs, soon our

army will be sweeping down on your beastly necks! . . .” Crack, crack! Rifles spat more vehemently, and the Cossack leader pitched headlong to the ground, riddled by the bullets of those whom he had frightened for a moment.

No one knew what it all meant. Fear seized the mob and gradually mounted to a hysterical pitch. No one else dared to take the platform. Orders were shouted about. Lines of soldiers began forming. I ran into a shop near by. But they would not wait on me, so I stepped to the door to look for another, just as a line of Reds stretching all the way across the street began sweeping up it. I turned to go back but found the door shut behind me. Men running were shot down just in front of me and crumpled up with that sickening finality that I had come to know in the Moscow street fighting.

I went to the corner to try to get away. Lines were coming from both the right and the left. To run then meant an acknowledgment of something sinister, so I took myself in hand and remained quiet. An excited, half-crazed man came running around the corner and bumped into me. I grabbed him by the arm and began to act for the benefit of the approaching line. I knew that movement now meant nothing but bullet holes. So I pretended to give him directions, pointing beyond the approaching line. I had the fellow's back toward the Reds, so that I could keep him from bolting. If they did not shoot us now, it would be mere good luck and the result of our own nerve. They came on, somehow took us to be two harmless individuals that did not deserve

their attention, separated and passed beyond us. That was one of the narrowest squeaks I had.

Back safely in camp at Beresovka, I was glad enough to plan with a friend, who had been appointed the local representative of the Red Cross, to return to Petrovsky-Zavod and pilot him into the country south of there to enable him to buy supplies for an invalid-transport that was being sent home. I had heard the country there was rich and that there was a big flour-mill from which we could certainly purchase supplies.

We hired a farm-wagon at Petrovsky-Zavod and started through the open country to the south, with no roads to follow and no bridges to take us over the streams. My friend Köves was a most delightful traveling companion for such a journey, where his jovial, irrepressibly humorous nature fitted well into the peaceful, unspoiled landscape that we first traversed. In the prairie we saw the most abundant wild life, basking in a sunshine that made us all most sensible of nature's bounty. There were blue foxes that slunk in sinuous lines between the low bushes in the grass, until we came too close to them, when they would go bounding off, with their tails making graceful undulations behind their lithe bodies. Another moment and we would see a great wolf, of wonderful gray, sunning himself and licking his sleek coat. They were too well fed and too drowsy to pay any attention to us, unless we drove right up to them. When one or two did rise to stretch themselves, I was amazed at their size and strength. They stood with their enormous topheavy

heads shoulders above anything I had ever imagined. We were glad we were not traveling by winter over this same road, when the wolf-fare might be lean.

The whole country was quiet and harmonious, as far in spirit from the turmoil of Red Siberia as it was from the actual battle-front. At the end of seven or eight hours of this we came to the edge of a plateau, where we looked down on an even more peaceful and inspiring scene, for this was the work of man's hand. Stretched out in the broad plain below were three separate villages, whose neatly cultivated fields ran to common bournes along varied strips of grain.

The first of the villages and the one for which we were bound was Khonkholoi, the chief settlement of the Seemaisky sect, who had been the Puritans of White Russia under Catherine the Great. Incensed at their opposition to the established church, this dominating ruler exiled them all "to a place beyond Petrovsky-Zavod, where no sun shines." The great Empress could not have had faithful information, or her envoys must have visited this fertile plain in a different season from the month of May, when we first saw its loveliness.

The village was clean and gave a very different impression from the ordinary Siberian town, owing to the fact that the log construction was hidden by gayly-colored stucco with painted wooden framings. Flowers filled the windows and gave the last touch that reminded me strongly of one of my own Hungarian villages.

As we came into the town, we searched for some

prisoners who we knew were working in the big flour-mill. They were most uneasy, when we called upon them, thinking we were Red recruiting officers. We did everything we could to confirm them in this belief and formally handed to one of them a letter addressed to him. When he read in it who we really were and saw the signature of a friend, recommending us to their courtesy, the welcome they gave us was overwhelming. They pointed out that even the machinery in the mill joined in the reception to us, as it too was Hungarian.

Their relief at finding friends instead of Red officers had to be demonstrated in a feast that would have kept us in our prison surroundings for two weeks. Pork chops, pancakes filled with jam and fresh cream cheese, vodka and everything the rich country afforded was spread before us like a miracle.

While Köves went about arranging for his purchase of Red Cross supplies, I began making acquaintances among the villagers with the purpose of seeing what work I could find for the few days we were to remain. It was only a little while before one of the old men brought me to the priest and joined with the other elders of the church in asking me to see what could be done to restore the paintings in the flat panels of the ceiling.

The figures were chiefly of flying angels, done in a primitive style similar to that of the ancient Copts. Instead of the stereotyped blue wings, they had been given brown ones, though they had blue eyes. All the panels were so badly covered by the smoke from the church candles and the dust of decades that they

had lost much of their vividness. In the village was a simple peasant artist, who could handle colors and apply them in the ordinary way but knew nothing about the methods of cleaning old paintings.

So, with him as helper and pupil, I cleaned off a panel, filled in and painted the places where the plaster had fallen and then varnished the whole for him as a model.

While I was working these four days in the church, the fathers of the congregation gave me in all reverence a very unique standing, which is difficult to phrase without seeming sacrilegious. I was considered, just as all who work on the church edifice were looked upon by this sect, as "a guest of Christ" and, as such, was treated with particular reverence in the homes where I stayed. Each day I was taken to a different house, that the congregation might share the burden and honor of caring for me.

Every dish I ate from was blessed, and on my table always burned two holy candles in big silver candlesticks. The cloth was of the purest linen, with decorated borders, while the women who waited on me were dressed in most beautifully embroidered peasant costumes with an elaborate headdress of finest taste. In all Russia, or in any other country for that matter, I have never seen a national costume comparable with this of the Seemaisky women.

Not only were the women so attractively dressed, but the whole colony seemed exceedingly clean and neat. They were all vegetarians and did not smoke or drink. But this did not make them intolerant as



many Puritans have been; for when I had finished my meals, with a smile they indicated to me a bench in the yard where I might sit and enjoy my cigarette.

Even though Khonkholoi had itself eight thousand inhabitants and the other two villages some seven thousand more, Köves could find nothing but the flour to purchase for his invalid-transport. But they told us that a day's journey to the south would bring us to the monastery and summer camp of the Buriats, who were coming for their annual exchange of merchandise with the Chinese and who might, consequently, have supplies of salt and other things Köves might wish to buy.

So we struck south and at evening came in sight of a snow-white round building, with three concentric walls, each rising above the other. This tent-like formation gave clear indication of its primitiveness. As we approached, we found it surrounded by Buriat families, camped around their high-wheeled carts and preparing their evening meals at a hundred fires. We drew up near to them, unharnessed the horses and made our own fire, sinking into the crowd as though it were our normal existence. They seemed indifferent to us, until one of their priests came and, speaking fluent Russian, assured us that we were welcome in their camp.

When he asked us our nationality and learned we were Hungarian, he took us quite off our feet by answering:

"Oh then you are countrymen of Professor Vambéry, who is the only European we know of that has

written deeply on the subject of Buddhism." From a man of his dress and general appearance we expected no such answer as this.

The following morning we were taken by the priest through the monastery, which we found divided into small classrooms, covered with straw mats. In each knelt a priest, explaining the painted wooden blocks and old parchments which contained the secrets of magic and astronomy and which were the identical ones used by the founders of this monastery hundreds of years ago. In some of the rooms there was a single pupil kneeling before the priest, in others three or four at most.

We arrived just at the proper time to witness their great religious festival which usually comes at the end of July or in August, but which had been pushed forward this year in fear of the threatening disturbances between the Red and White forces. A portable altar was brought out and placed underneath a big canopy. In front of it a semicircle of priests bowed and swayed rhythmically, while another group dashed madly about, waving horsehair switches in the air as if to chase away all the evil spirits. A great fire was lighted near the altar, and the Buriat men formed a close, compact circle around it. Then a priest emerged, carrying a bundle tied with ribbons and colored paper streamers.

"Oh *Bozhe!*" cried our Russian driver, "It's a baby! These scoundrels are going to sacrifice a child!"

Our Russian-speaking priest swung round on him with an angry look in his eyes, reproaching him with:

"It is not! You can't speak like that; but don't ask any questions." The bundle went into the fire, the priests started a weird rhythmical chant, and gradually all quieted down again. Then they began to show an unfriendly attitude, and we decided to withdraw our blundering coachman. As the Buriats had practically nothing to sell, we turned back to Khonkholoi and thence to Petrovsky-Zavod.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### SHOOT THEM!

ON our arrival some of my prisoner-friends told me that the Bolshevik committee appointed to organize all the workers of the place had come and were looking for me. The following evening two of these commissars, one a Hungarian Jew, met me in the theater and, with many polite references to my humanitarian work among the people of the town, broached the subject of my joining the Red organization. I gave it as my belief that there was no necessity for artists to organize under the Red flag and that every one should be allowed to follow his own opinion. They told me that they would make an exception of me on my record, if I promised not to influence any one else to stay out of the party. But when the meeting was called for the following afternoon and none of the prisoners joined, the commissars turned on me as the one responsible for the men's attitude and told me they would have to withdraw their promise. I was to go back to Bere-sovka with the rest, and they threatened the men with the despatch of a commissar who would put the fear of the devil into them.

On the following Friday, bath day, when I went up to the bath-house at the station which I had been

regularly allowed to use, no one greeted me. There was a fanatical Bolshevik commissar, who, as it turned out, had been sent as a "strong-handed man," holding forth about something very definite. I listened. He said:

"That artist fool! He's a professor, but we've got lots of professors in our ranks far more prominent than he is or ever will be. He thinks he can beat the Red army. He'll get his onion plucked, if he isn't careful." I was tempted to disclose my identity, but thought better of it and asked:

"What is it you've got against him anyhow?"

"He keeps those others from joining the Reds; but he'll get his, the crazy ass. His big talk will make him swing. You will see what we do for him."

"Oh my, isn't that awful!" I smiled at the others and went on with my bath. Some time before my trip to the south I had moved from the house of *Mamasha* to one of the small dressing-rooms in the theater. As I wandered back to my quarters and came around a corner of the building, there not ten paces away from me was the old janitor talking with a small group of Red soldiers. I had just time to jump back into the shadow and waited for them to go. I could hear the janitor saying:

"Really I haven't seen him. He hasn't been here for weeks. What else can I say?" All this time the posse had their backs to me, and he was shaking with fear lest they should discover me around my corner. I waited breathlessly until the old fellow signaled me that the coast was clear. Once inside, he talked rapidly.

"You'd better get out of here immediately. They will surely come back to investigate." After some deliberating, we decided to make the mow of a near-by stable my temporary refuge. Accordingly I packed my belongings and, as soon as night came, I slipped over to the stable, climbed up into the little cubbyhole, settled myself by the tiny window commanding a view of the back part of the theater and lived there two or three days all by myself.

The next event that stirred me was the appearance of another group of five Red soldiers, who came to the stage-door and started to force the lock. This done, they called "Mr. Imrey!" That "Mr." was significant. No common Bolshevik would have used it. Scrutinizing them carefully, I finally recognized two of them as boys from the town who had been taken almost forcibly into the army and decided to risk disclosing my whereabouts.

"Come on quick! We've got an armored train to take you away. It is too damned dangerous around here. Let's get out." Then they explained that they had heard in Irkutsk that a warrant had been issued for my arrest and that I was to be court-martialed. One of them, who was the commander of an armored train, explained:

"Not having anything else to do, we've brought the train along to take you wherever you want to go."

There was something magnificently humorous in the idea. They were running their peripatetic fort well over a thousand miles to do me this little favor of removing me from the immediate reach of arrest

by others in their administration whose ideas they did not approve. Where to go? Wherever I wished. Inasmuch as I had still the unfilled order to decorate the theater at the 37th Razrezd, I elected to go there in my private armored train, thoroughly protected from prying Reds.

Once arrived, I had the most liberal treatment from the town authorities—not only ample supplies of paints and materials, but plenty of assistance and the best of food. They also gave me a horse to ride. This furnished me the excuse for going about most of the days and working at night. Any one looking beneath the surface of things could see that an upheaval was more than probable, so that I took the opportunity to scour the country, especially visiting a Buriat camp, to know what course to follow when the crisis should come. I laid by a supply of dry flour-cakes and other transportable food and planned to run to the Buriats if the necessity should arise.

During my visits to them, I learned to admire their strong, husky women and the way they did the ordinary man's work just as the women of the American Indians did. They took care of the huts, cooked and rode the horses in the shafts before the primitive high-wheeled carts, sitting them like men in their manlike costumes. Being a comparatively primitive people, they not infrequently, during their nomadic wanderings, left the aged and infirm behind to die.

The town at the 37th Razrezd was peopled by a very low Siberian type and was one hundred per cent

Bolshevik. It was more nearly *au naturel* than any place I found in Siberia which claimed to be a town. The streets were simply the spaces that happened to come between the lines of the houses or in front of them. There was no attempt to make any roads other than what the passing wagons and carts made for themselves. In and about the town were the old pits of open lignite mines that were mostly filled with water, as well as the great gaping holes that were still producing brown coal for the railway. Before the coming of the Reds the mines yielded one hundred eighty carloads a day; later on they averaged about thirty. Along came a commissar who threatened to cut the pay and then bring troops if the old output was not restored. The pits at once took on another rhythm and yielded some two hundred cars within a very few days. This was the work of a single "strong hand."

One fine day a line of peasant wagons went racing over the fields with a gay wedding-party on board, making repeated tours of the town as the only form of demonstration open to them. They were singing to the music of an accordion and many of them were several points into the wind. Suddenly the tune changed, as one of the wagons upset and spilled out its passengers. I forced my way through the crowd and assisted the few who had presence of mind enough left to help the injured. The old woman in whose house we were taking our meals had a broken arm. I carried her into the *sobrania* and managed to apply splints with a plaster cast outside of them. As I put her into a carriage and took her home, car-



ing for her as best I could, I little knew what this natural bit of help would one day mean to me. By my care of her through the following two months I built up such a reputation as a surgeon that I had constant demands made upon me for everything from curing the crippled and blind to acting as mid-wife.

As I was using many of my days for trips on horseback and swimming in the river, I worked far into the night. One evening a group of commissars came in and asked why I was working over hours. I explained that the scenery would always be shown under artificial light and that it was, therefore, best to paint it under the same conditions. Although apparently the most ignorant of men, they told me that there was no one else in the country who could do this work and that I could ask any price I wanted for it. So they held a meeting the following day and voted me a fifty per cent increase of pay.

The summer slipped quietly by, with weeks of undisturbed work and most enjoyable trips into the surrounding country. The village lay among forest-covered mountains, wild and peaceful. Rumors, however, reached us from the front, which was now near Baikal, that the Czechs were stern enemies and that the Reds were gradually giving way before them. The village was seized with the fear of what would surely happen in this civil war, when the enemy came into control.

Suddenly one day all was feverish activity. Trains began passing early in the morning, with locomotives running backward, showing that there had not been

time or opportunity to turn them. Both tracks were being used for the constant stream of Red soldiers that were pouring through. The Czechs were bound to follow on their heels. The people of the town left their houses along the one main street, many of them, especially the men, piling into the train they had been holding for just this eventuality. The women gathered in the school near the station. The crowded trains and the nervous haste of the men to get away gave us a queer sensation of being left to keep house alone in a deserted village. But there were two exceptions to this.

The old woman with the mending arm had not yet recovered sufficiently to be able to leave her home, so that she remained quietly there with her daughter and gave us our regular meals. She asked what the Czechs would do, if they really came. I told her that their first interest would be the pigs—these they would surely take. So the good woman had her daughter kill one of them at once, and we lived high.

The other exception to the exodus was the dogs. During ordinary times they barked at us as we passed the whole length of the street to the old woman's house at the extreme end. We were strangers and had to be treated as such by them. But on this day, when we went for our noonday meal, they wagged their tails and came to make friends with us in a most laughable fashion. They too had sensed the momentous change that had come over the village.

By evening my assistant, who was a mild-

mannered, cowardly South-German, began to fear for his life. Together we had counted forty-two of the retreating trains by the time that twilight fell. Then a commissar led out a battalion and formed a line of defense in continuation of the *sobrania*, where we had our quarters as well as our work. When I pointed out to him the folly of placing his line in that particular position, he asked me to come and take charge and arrange it properly. No, I was an invalid and had no heart for more fighting. But I did advise them to stretch their line in the edge of the forest, where they would have better protection and better vision, and suggested also that a charge of dynamite under the railway-bridge would not be a bad idea for protecting their rear.

With the coming of evening I took refuge in a familiar employment for my times of greatest strain and fell to painting a symbolistic picture. As I worked, there came a great explosion. I rushed out to see the sky lighted up by the flames rising from the burning station. The Reds had evidently blown it up as the last train left. Another roar told us that the bridge had gone. I came back to find my companion lying flat on the floor in a dead funk. During the day we had moved from our regular rooms to a corner in the library of the museum section of the building. There we barricaded ourselves with bookshelves, making a complete little room that would hardly be discovered. In it we put easy chairs, a liberal supply of the pork the old woman had cooked and a big jug of water.

Along toward midnight, while I was taking a last

look around outside, I heard some one calling my name. On answering, I found the caller was a young worker from the mines, who came up trembling with his revolver shaking dangerously in his hand. He had been sent by his commissar to find out what he could about the movements of the Whites and was livid with fear. I told him the best thing that he could do would be to throw away that revolver, as the Whites would certainly shoot him, if they caught him with it.

"Are you sure?" he asked, in doubtful tones.

"Positive of it," I said and took him in to give him the shelter he sought. A few days later, after the Czechs had come, I discovered him with a white band on his arm and quite the brave soldier once more. I cite this simply as a typical case of the way the inhabitants shifted overnight from one side to the other and had little heart in any cause, except that of saving their skins.

The next morning we peeped out from our hiding-place and saw the first of the Czech trains pull into the station. More came and were held up for some time, until the bridge, that lay beyond the town, could be repaired. Then they began streaming by just as the Red trains had done the day before, and in the same way we counted forty-eight of them by evening. We did not venture into the town the whole day, remaining quiet among our books. I spent most of the day reading encyclopedia articles about the fauna of Siberia and about Hungary, my native land.

On the second morning we were just discussing

what the Czechs would probably do in the town, when through the narrow crack between our wooden shutters we saw some strangers.

"There they come. . . . They are rather handsome. . . . Look at what fine boots they have. . . . And they are wearing the insignia of officers, the first we have seen since the beginning of the revolution.

"But look! Why did they do that? Oh, the dirty murderer!" Without any warning they began to attack a young fellow who came near them and smiled as though he had something he was planning to explain. They first struck him down and kicked him unmercifully. My companion's lips quivered, and he turned pale. We looked again. One of the officers slashed the lad's neck with his sword. They struck again and again until the head was severed. Then they seized it by the hair and threw it through the window of a house, laughing as though they had played some practical joke. What had we to expect from such men?

But they turn our way next. . . . They try the door. . . . They rattle it. . . . Silence. . . . My companion looks at me. . . . In his eyes is the fear of a wild animal. . . . But the door holds, and they go away. . . . We breathe again and cower down behind our shelves.

Thus we passed the second day of the White occupation. Men were falling on the streets. Where they had hidden and why they had not gone away we never learned.

A third day went by in the same manner. We had laid in no bread, and our other supplies were ex-

hausted. So toward evening of the fourth day I ventured out. The *feldsher*, who had remained in his home, gave me an order and told me to go to the shop, which the Whites were now stocking with supplies.

I went there and found the place filled with White and Czech officers. I hesitated a minute before going in. They called me to enter. The man in charge was the same who had previously been there and who was one of the leading Bolsheviks of the place. He whispered to me over the counter:

"Go around to the back door and wait there." After half an hour the door finally opened and he appeared with a big armful of bread, packages of sugar, zweiback and sweets. As he gave them to me, he said in loud tones that made me fear for both his safety and my own:

"These are better for you, comrade, than for those filthy scoundrels." I hurried away to enjoy the taste of food once more and to be out of reach of those who seemed so bent upon killing.

"I had begun to fear something had happened to you," said my library-companion, "when you stayed away so long."

"Why are you hiding off by yourself in the dark here?" I retorted. "The world is at peace now. See all the bread I have brought you!"

By the following evening the Czechs had already organized a theatrical performance in the *sobrania*, in which I aided them as much as I could by finding costumes and other equipment. After it, one of their officers gave a formal talk about Hungary and the

part the Hungarians had played in forming an interfering wedge between the Jugo-Slavs and the Czechs, saying that, if it had not been for our nationals coming in between, there would have been a great unified Slavic people inhabiting central Europe.

After this, although not complimented by the lecturer, we started to feel a little more at ease with our new masters. But the next morning I was wakened by some one shouting my name. I looked out and saw a ragged and most unsoldierly patrol, with feet sticking out of their tied-on shoes. Their commandant wore a skull on his sleeve, the insignia of "the death battalion," that body which went first into the towns and villages and put fear into the people by killing a few in each place. Even in peaceful Khonkholoi, I afterwards heard, they killed their usual dozen. We thought they had left the town after the first day and were much depressed to see them still about.

"Look, they are coming in!" said my quaking companion. Sure enough, they were at the door, then inside and the next moment they were searching us. The commandant examined every piece of paper in our barricaded den, took my wallet with all the money I had earned and gave his stabbing command of:

"*Poidyomtye* (Let us go)! You are under arrest!" With my heavy bundle of canvases and painting-materials under one arm and my bag of recently accumulated personal possessions under the other, I looked back with regret upon our quiet little sanctum and followed the commandant. We had gone but a

few steps, when we came upon a group of women that stopped to watch us pass. Among them was our old woman, who, the moment she discovered us, besieged the guard with:

"Those are the finest men I have known. They have never done a thing. . . ."

"Shut up, you old hag, I don't want to hear any of your weepings!" the officer interrupted her. But she only screamed the louder:

"Oh, my God, they are going to shoot them . . . the murderers! . . . You'll pay for this!" Her screams were supplemented by those of the other women and did not help our calm.

They marched us to the station, where the Czechs had their headquarters. The officer in command looked at us and asked:

"What have you got there, more Bolsheviks?"

"The devil knows! They had a lot of money on them." At that one of the officers strode up to me and put his hand into my inner pocket. Finding nothing and being told by the patrol commander that he had already taken it, the man gave me a shove in his mingled anger and disappointment. As we were taken into the room, the officer in charge of the drum-head court-martial asked:

"What nationality are you?"

"I am a Hungarian." They all stiffened as though they had been bitten by a mad dog. One of them snapped back at me:

"That means *Magyar*!"

"As you say," I answered quietly. For a moment all was still. Then one of the officers made a depre-



cating gesture to the judge, as though to indicate that they had heard enough.

During that interval of silence I looked out of the window and saw four men standing by the railway-track, lined up to be shot. In front of them the soldiers were fingering their rifles, waiting for the command to fire.

"Shoot them!" said the judge, and almost the same instant the men crumpled and fell. My heart stopped for a moment. My companion thought the



command had been for the men outside, but I knew that it was meant for us! God, how sickening it was to see the certain finality with which those four went down! And we were to follow them as soon as we could be marched across the intervening space.

I looked around and saw the sarcastic smiles on the faces of the officers. The judge had a puffed, inhuman, coarse face, red and hard, the typical paid soldier of all the ages. I knew the moment I saw him what type of justice I had to expect at his

hands. In a rage at this travesty of a "hearing," I shouted at him in answer to his sentence:

"What for? What have we done?" Then I thought to myself:

"By God, I will not die like a rat. Let them take me, if they can." My eyes fell on the sword of one of the officers near me. I was blind and saw nothing else but that weapon. With one leap I was on it, but they got my hand, and a struggle began. They were too many, and things were going against us, when, in the very midst of the *mêlée*, a carriage drove up. Three men in the uniform of Tsarist gendarmes leaped from their horses and shouted commands.

"The general wants these men brought to headquarters! Hands off!"

"What for?" growled the Czechs.

"I don't know; but it looks as though these fellows know something very important; and he wants all their papers and things brought along." Grudgingly they handed us over to the trio to put us into the carriage. One gendarme rode ahead and two behind us. It was all so threatening in its cut-and-dried official certainty that my assistant stutteringly asked:

"What are they doing? . . . Where are they taking us?"

"How should I know? To the sausage factory, I guess."

"Don't jest, Herr Professor! It's too desperate!" I didn't feel a whit more comfortable about it all than he did, but I couldn't see any use in needlessly harassing our frayed nerves. As we progressed on this fateful journey, we came to a fork in the

road and were taken down the lower way, not forward along the direct route to headquarters. Every one knew, especially the Czechs, that those who were executed by the White Russian staff were more than likely compelled to undergo torture before their death, so that our thoughts ran fast during these short moments.

There seemed something strange, wrong in the atmosphere of the whole thing. I looked several times into the eyes of our guard but saw nothing there to encourage me. There seemed to be the suggestion of a smile playing around their eyes and lips. Others had been taken into the forest, toward which we were dropping, and summarily shot. Now we were well under the hill and out of sight of the station. Then they stopped. Would they put an end to us here?

One of them reached into his pocket to draw out something. I was unarmed and could only wait. He stretched his hand to me and—offered me a cigarette! God be praised for that much at least. Then he smiled and said:

“You have had a very narrow squeak! We came just in time, didn’t we?” Quite at sea over it all, I asked:

“Where are we going?”

“Home to eat,” was the surprising answer. Then he started to laugh. As we were still torn with suspense and plainly showed it, he went on:

“Oh, I forgot that you don’t know me. It is my mother whom you helped, and she sent me along to get you out of your trouble.” Dazed and hardly

crediting the truth of it all, we went mechanically along to his mother's house. Such a greeting! The dear old woman put her arms about her son and kissed him, saying with great emotion:

"You see, if this man had not been here to help your poor old mother, you never would have seen her again."

"*Ladno, ladno, Mamasha!* (All right, all right, little Mother!) but we are hungry. Let's eat." And what a feast we had! We gradually lost our fear and warmed up, as the meal went on and we realized that we were now properly certificated as worthy of White protection. It was a double celebration, first over the happy result of our escapade and, secondly, over the homecoming of the young Tsarist sympathizer who had been ousted and chased away by the Reds. He had returned just the evening before. Twenty-four hours, difference in his traveling schedule would have stopped the story here—and without publication! But as I dozed off to sleep that night, those two words "Shoot them!" still rang in my ears and shook my wonted peace of mind.

## CHAPTER XIX

### MANCHURIA AND THE PRIMORSK

THE Czechs soon moved on to the east and left White officials in charge of our little town. After many vagaries of chance, it was decided that all of us prisoners must go back to Beresovka. The severity of the new régime made me feel that I had been treated as a gentleman by the Reds and that the rule of these White "deliverers" of the country was more heavy-handed than any Tsarist or other control that had preceded it.

While we were being held for some technicalities of papers in my old haunt of Petrovsky-Zavod, an invalid-transport from Khabarovsk on the Amur pulled into the station. Most of the men streamed out into the glorious sunlight of the Siberian autumn and lay about on the grass, overjoyed by the thought of at last going home. In the doctor who had charge of the train I recognized an old friend of many years' standing from southern Hungary. After our first enthusiastic greetings, we fell to talking of what it meant to the men to be really on their way back.

"But you don't realize the full force of it," he explained, "until you see what hope can do to them physically. While we were evacuating the hospital at Khabarovsk, they told us that many of the cases

we were entraining would not last for twenty-four hours and that we should only be killing them to take them on board. You should have seen these cases at the end of the day's span of life they had been given. They began to pick up by leaps and bounds, and now look at them."

He pointed to one near us on the grass.

"That fellow could not bear to be left behind. He was dying, but insisted that we take him. Now he is gaining every day. No one would think he had been so near death."

Then the blow came. While at this station the Czech command issued orders for their detrainment at the Beresovka camp. The Czech officer giving the command told the doctor:

"Not an invalid-transport or an invalid leaves Siberia while there is a single Czech still in the country!" So hope surrendered to the old black despondency, and the men were carried on to our Beresovka barracks and hospital. There we saw a cruel proof of the effect of the mind on the body. They began dying, four or five a day, and nothing the doctors could do would stem the toll of despair.

Arriving in Beresovka two days later than the train, I had full opportunity to draw a comparison between our old and our new masters. The Reds in Siberia, although brutal, wild and reckless, always showed some evidence of respect for human life. In their ranks, among unquestioned desperadoes, one found many idealists. Their precepts overshadowed the errors of the ignorant masses. But the Whites

were a crowd of blood-thirsty, merciless beasts, whose deeds, in my estimation, eclipsed anything that the crazed mob of the French Revolution would have dared to attempt.

They came into a country where many had suffered bitterly under the Red régime and where any normal administration would have received a great welcome and definite support. Yet they failed utterly to comprehend their opportunity and, instead, seemed bent on nothing but vengeance and power.

There were endless instances of their misjudgment and cruelty which I saw personally or had at first hand. One of those at Beresovka illustrates with damning certainty the way in which they turned many places one hundred per cent Bolshevik, which had previously been far from uniformly so.

After the Reds had been routed by the Czechs at Kultuk and were retreating by trainloads along the line, the Beresovka commissar sought to strengthen his force by adding a battalion made up of the Chinese coolies working about the town and camp. The latter thought it rather a lark and were terribly set up over having fine, warm uniforms to wear. But their drill was not up to their pride in the new clothes.

"Don't hold your rifle down like that; you'll be shooting some one," came from one of their drill-masters on that first and only afternoon of training.

The next morning they were strung along a hill-top with the other Red forces, when the combined Czech and Whites surrounded them and killed many before the rest were taken prisoners. These they

herded, coolies and Reds alike, to the bank of the Selenga, stripped them of their uniforms and drove them into the cold stream in their underwear. Then, as though in a rifle gallery breaking clay pipes, they shot them as they tried to swim or wade away.

What was most sickening of all was the wild sport which some women in the crowd were getting out of the game.

"There's one swimming off. Shoot him quick, or he'll get away! . . . There's another, way out in the stream!" were the incredible words that fell from the lips of some of the gentler sex to their officer swains. Civil war has always been known to be brutally inhuman, but I doubt whether anything since the days of Genghis Khan has approached these months in Siberia.

The heavy hand of the new rulers was also immediately felt in the prison-camp. Coming back, I found two or three generations of our "family" reassembled from all the corners of Siberia. This gave me infinite pleasure, especially the meeting with Hajnocy, the poet-engineer who had been drafted into the Red army and had managed to write me, when we were separated, the most reliable news from all parts of the country where he had been stationed. Through all the depression which came with the rough treatment from our new overlords we had evenings of undiluted pleasure and no little amusement.

Then, one day, there came into this life a new element which no one seemed to have foreseen. Word ran through the barracks like a flash that Japanese officers were measuring the buildings in a far section



of the camp. There were the Sons of Nippon, dapper, fresh and clean, saluting one another in most punctilious manner and speaking in short, staccato tones. In the morning they were followed by four regiments, totaling six thousand men, who installed themselves as our close neighbors.

As they marched in we noticed at the rear of each regiment quite a group of stragglers who were evidently ill. We learned that the severity of the climate was already beginning to tell on them, a fact that was sadly confirmed the very next day by the first three or four of those Shinto and Buddhist funerals which became increasingly numerous as the cold grew more severe.

Finding a new interest, I began immediately to make friends with some of the Japanese, who were most kindly disposed toward us prisoners. Soon I met one of their quartermaster officers and showed him some of my work, with the happy result of an order for a portrait. When it was finished and I was asked my fee for this and for some of the sketches he selected from my collection, I ventured fifty yen.

"No yen, no yen," came immediately in answer, but he rewarded me handsomely with sugar, cocoa, cigarettes and tinned beef, showing perhaps that the quartermaster is the same the world around.

Then I began studying their language and especially their interesting writing. The characters attracted me so genuinely, that I had soon learned to "design" some two hundred of them and made comparable progress in their spoken tongue. This stood me in excellent stead in later months.

For now, after all these long years in Siberia, came the order to evacuate the camp to Vladivostok. I sought to liven the journey for my fellows by pointing out familiar places along the way. Here I had been taken aboard my private armored train, here I had been ordered to be shot and had seen the sickening line of men that went down before our turn came. At Petrovsky-Zavod the sons of *Mamasha*, to whom I had written that we were ordered away, brought me a great round loaf of bread, fully two feet in diameter and enough for the family for several days.

But better than that was the message and the present from the Seemaisky mill-owner at Khonkholoi, who despatched a man to express to me his sympathy for the loss of my money, about which he had heard, and to ask me to accept one hundred roubles from him with his blessings and those of the other members of the church. Never was gift more welcome or more enjoyed. The family lived on it all the way through Transbaikalia and Manchuria. As I passed out of Siberia, that little town of Khonkholoi, with its kindly, clean-lived peasants, the spotless linen, the blessed dishes and the service of gratitude, was the single place in the whole land that I regretted. It remains always in my mind as a monument to what inspiration of the right kind can do for man.

As we journeyed, we saw many derailed and overturned trains by the way, one still burning and too dangerous for us to pass for a time. The bridges were destroyed in many places. At Chita, where the spans were hanging down into the river, our train descended

slowly along a temporary line and ran out over the ice in a way that seemed strange and dangerous. Nor was the constant cracking and crackling of the ice under the weight of the slowly moving cars anything to reassure us. The engineer literally crawled along. The track had been laid so close to the bridge that the ice swayed at the sides of the open places around the piers, where the water had not frozen. It was the strangest river crossing of my life.

Then Manchuria! What a change! What abundance, and how much our money could buy for us! And what wonderful news from a passing train of American soldiers! The armistice had been signed, so that all the world looked different! But new orders came to dampen our enthusiasm. Nikolsk-Ussurisky instead of Vladivostok was to be our destination. That combined with the free air we were now breathing to engender further thoughts of escape.

I had in my pocket the visiting-card and Harbin address of an old Jewish merchant and his daughter, who had assured me of a cordial welcome, if ever I would come to their home. In one of the stations the old gentleman had been thrown down from the steps of the train by a drunken soldier, when the Reds were still in power, and I had helped the girl—his granddaughter—to bathe his wound and take him back to his place. Why should I not take advantage of their offer now?

We were already approaching Harbin. Once there, I thought to run for it, but the area along the track and around the station was carefully guarded. So I

had to wait until the train was out of the city and well under way. Then I jumped out into the night. Unfortunately my knee hit an unobliging stone and took command for a time. However, as it grew less painful, I started across frozen plowed fields for the lights far away below a great em-



bankment. The houses and everything around me were strange and different. I knocked at one boarded shop-front only to have threatening gibberish shouted at me through the cracks. Again I tried, but with no better result. The bars were not taken down.

Finally a servant appeared from one of the shops and spoke with me in broken Russian. By the aid of his directions I eventually found the address on my

card and there succeeded in enticing another Chinese into the open by my persistent knocking. But the place was a shoe-factory—the family lived far away. For a silver rouble I hired him as guide through the maze of queer streets and the queerer smells and sounds. It was certainly a strange journey in a strange land. My only capital was some ten roubles left from our family expenses and the bundle of sketches which I managed to carry out with me. At last we arrived at the house of my friends. What would they say now to a prisoner from Siberia?

Thanks to their fondness for cards, I found the whole family still up playing a game with friends. They were only indifferently polite at first, until I pulled out from my wallet and presented the card their daughter had given me. Then everything changed like magic. The father and mother told me the daughter was away and the grandfather had retired, but that they were very grateful for the aid the "Herr Professor" had rendered them. They plied me with questions about the simplest of matters, which I supposed all the world knew. But hadn't I eaten? They would see to that at once. A table was set before me and soon spread with such a banquet as my eyes had not seen for many a day. Yet I could not eat because of their persistent questions. It was a gnawing temptation that I had to resist. And their questions were so trivial. How had I managed to jump from a moving train without being killed? How had I ever found their house in a strange city among strange people? A hundred others followed.

While the table was being spread a shock had been administered me to make my mind even more at sea than the strain and experiences of the evening had tended to carry it. I had turned and caught sight of myself in a big mirror. Could it be possible that the face I saw was mine? I had aged twenty years since the days when I had been in such surroundings. They would not believe me when I told them I was only thirty-two. My cheeks were thin and drawn and my face deeply lined, all so much in contrast to their sleek and rosy appearance.

That was not all. I now felt entirely different from what I had but a few hours back. In my Siberian surroundings, among the natives and as head of my family, as well as a specialist worker in places where there were few of my profession, I had a distinct sense of my position. Now I was an escaping "prisoner" among people whose thoughts ran in quite different and trivial channels from the turgid ones which mine had followed all these years. Would I ever be able to readjust myself to the new conditions, and what would be my standing in any circle of ordinary life? I was frankly ill at ease among the commonplace and uncertain of how I should adjust myself to it.

"And what do you intend to do now?" asked my host in a German-Jewish jargon.

"I am heading for Mukden and Shanghai."

"I am afraid you cannot make it, my friend, as the roads around here are guarded by the Russians and further south by the Japanese. Then, too, in the

south you will run into civil war. And have you some kind of passport?"

I exhibited my Danish passport which I had bought in Petrovsky-Zavod for a few roubles. That might help—but nothing could help now. I was so dead from fatigue that I begged to be allowed to sleep.

The next day they gave further proof of their kindness by making every arrangement for me to follow my own ideas, however difficult they felt it would be for me to succeed. They chose two of my canvases, for which they paid me forty Mexican dollars, took me in a droshky to the first station south of Harbin and bought me a ticket to Mukden. Their whole attitude from the moment they identified me was one of extreme courtesy and kindliness, which I shall never forget.

In the train I thought to be comparatively safe, as I was the only "Danish" traveler there. But a Belgian turned up, very anxious to talk. The only escape lay in silence and feigned sleep. That, however availed nothing with the Japanese officer who came along to inspect passports. After asking a question in French, to which I replied with my most furbished-up Parisian, he only drew his breath noisily in between his teeth and asked another, with little relevance. That seemed to exhaust his stock of French, so he put my passport in his pocket and went away. Shortly he returned with a French under-officer, who spoke fluent Japanese.

"What is your name?" was the simple question

that threw me into despair. I was Danish, that much I knew perfectly, but my mind had gone blank on the next important detail of my passport. How I, after squirming out of all the difficult situations the past years had held for me, could have slipped so blandly in the small detail of knowing my own name was incomprehensible. So I took refuge in an attempt to outwit them.

“Why, there it is on the passport. You have the spelling there,” and I tried to point it out to them, so that I could get a look at it myself, but to no avail. The Frenchman snapped the paper away and told me to prepare to leave the train at the next station. To make matters safer they placed a Japanese soldier on guard over me. He had such a clear notion of his duty that he stood immediately in front of me and always within easy reach. It irritated me terribly.

As we were slowing down for the station, I rose. That was his signal for some sort of action, so he took hold of me and tried to push me back into my seat. I was sorry to take advantage of the difference in our statures but could not, on the other hand, let him interfere with my traveling plans. So, once in the aisle beside the seats, I hit him fair and sent him ten or twelve feet to the rear, after which I bolted for the door and jumped.

We were just coming into the station. The injured representative of the Mikado was shrieking as though he were dying. It was no time for me to hesitate. I ran across the road, down a narrow alley, filled with ashes and rubbish, and out into a larger lighted



street. There were more of the uncongenial-looking Japanese there, so I took another by-way and struck for the less lighted part of town. Two or three squares further on I spied a restaurant, into which I walked with all the calm I could muster. Inside a single patron was sitting at one of the small tables. Even though he wore a Chinese cotton coat, I saw at a glance that he was a Viennese, so I took a place near-by and waited for him to speak.

"Are you a prisoner of war?" he asked.



"*I was*, that is, I hope *I was*," I answered and proceeded at once to explain my sudden arrival.

"Whew! You are in for it. You don't know the vindictiveness of these little fellows. Strip your coat and put on this Chinese cap. Take this paper and pretend to be writing. We'll have to bluff it as best we can. They'll be through every building in the town within the next few minutes."

I stripped off my coat, threw it into a corner with my bundles and bent over my writing. It was none too soon, for the patrol was on us. They looked around, while my friend sputtered some Chinese at

me, which I pretended to understand and answer, made up their mind that neither of us was their man and went out, leaving me free to breathe once more.

My new-found friend immediately pricked the bubble of my plans by telling me that he had been interned by the Chinese as an enemy subject and that there was no chance at all in Mukden or further south. We must turn back to Harbin and make for Vladivostok, the only place where one could hope to get away. That would have been sad news for me, were I not in the frame of mind to go anywhere that would take me away from my uncongenial Japanese hosts.

I was put up by the restaurant proprietor in a rat-riddled room for the night, wondering whether my new acquaintance would really turn up on the morrow or not. He did, and together we took a Chinese dilapidated relic of a droshky for the next station to the north. There we elected to occupy one of the little platforms at the end of a freight-car in a train that was just leaving and drew into Harbin without passport or ticket formalities.

There Fortune relented and smiled. Not a dozen yards from where we dropped off the freight stood a prisoner from Beresovka.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I am on the transport there for Nikolsk-Ussurisky. It is the last one going through." We took it without further ado.

We thought we had passed our age of depressing and ghastly experiences, but had once more to be

witnesses to one of the ineffably criminal acts of the Whites. Half an hour after our arrival, while we were lined up awaiting orders to march to the barracks, a train of Red prisoners was run into a neighboring side-track.

One of the locked cars near us was opened. There was a peasant woman not far away selling bread in French loaves. The instant the door of the wagon slid back, a wild rush took the men across the intervening space like mad hyenas. In a flash there was not a loaf left of her great pile. The hungry men piled up on one another like fiends, snatching the loaves or broken bits from their comrades and stuffing their mouths as full as they could, that no one else might steal it from them. Those last out of the train and into the disappointed circle eyed the others with famished, wolf-like expressions, almost whining in their disappointment. We soon learned from some of them that their car had not been opened for fourteen days and that no food had been given them.

A second wagon offered a different sight. The door slid back on its track, but no one came out. There was no one to tell their tale. Typhoid and the cold had made of that group but one frozen irrecognizable mass!

Somber indeed was our welcome to this new home. At a bend in the road near the barracks there was a group of Kalmukoff's Cossacks who were amusing themselves in a most incredible manner. As we came along, they struck the men over the head and shoulders with the flat of their swords. One of our men had an ear slashed, while another lost a part of his

nose. One of the more energetic revelers even broke his sword over some abnormally resistant head. Personally I did not fare so badly, as I was at the end of the column and found the sportsmen tired. I got off with only a light blow on the arm.

A Japanese officer also appeared on the scene just at that moment and asked of us in German:

*"Warum machen sie das?"* We could not give any more reason than his own eyes supplied; but he acted on that and rushed up a patrol of a dozen men in time to see the last of Kalmukoff's braves returning to their barrack.

In spite of this drastic manner of greeting us, Nikolsk proved quite the most interesting and agreeable place that we had seen. It was a beautifully laid-out city, but now almost entirely deserted, because of the ravages of civil war. There were huge barracks, sufficient to accommodate two hundred thousand soldiers. Into one of these we were put, with permission to clean it up and arrange it as best we could. The moment it was in fine order and clean, the barrack-commandant moved us along to another and filled this one with the gathering White forces. Thus they used us as an effective cleaning-battalion through many of their buildings.

Work was also more plentiful for us prisoners, as the town had been so drastically depopulated. Cinema houses, theaters, and many of the public institutions were entirely staffed by our men. This gave us the much-enjoyed privilege of going free to the evening amusements, whenever we so chose. One feature of the new conditions amused me. During

the days in Siberia the high-ranking officers in our camps and many from the nobility had consistently refused to soil their hands with working for the natives, some of them even chiding me for degrading myself in taking so many jobs far below the dignity of a gentleman.

Now the tables got somehow turned round. One of our noblemen was discovered running a laundry in partnership with his servant. Another found a piece of rope and rigged up a passable sweep, with which he cleaned chimneys. A third, who tried hard to find some kind of job but never succeeded, came back one day with twenty-five roubles. Where had he turned the trick? A lonely dog had followed him and become very friendly. When a stranger asked if he would sell him, his dream of what twenty-five roubles would do got the better of him and induced him to close the deal. Then there was the officers' shoemaker's shop, where a high-toned major presided over a row of once-dapper hussar commanders.

During the first month in the place my fairly constant goddess of luck seemed to have forsaken me. I worked steadily and hard for a man in a zinc etching shop and was told to come for my pay just the day before Christmas. Flushed with the thoughts of all the things we were to have for the family Christmas tree, I took one of the boys along to help carry the bundles. At the shop they told me the place was closed and the man had skipped to Harbin. Never was I so affected as when we had to go back without even so much as a candle. After a long silence one of the youngsters in the family remarked:

"No Christmas for us this year!"

"You are growing sentimental in your old age," was the only parry I had instead of the armfuls of bundles, which I have never to this day ceased to regret. Stung by my failure, I started after Christmas to forage with more determination. Peculiarly enough, my first success was among some Koreans in their village at the edge of the town. There were wealthy men among them who wished to have their portraits painted. With the first one or two I failed to please. They complained that I had given them a yellow hue which was not true to life. So I painted the next with Occidental flesh-tints and immediately became both popular and opulent.

Then another offer came to me through Köves, who was acting as interpreter for the commandant and lived outside the camp. His housemate, a Russian, had a most tempting proposal that would bring in vast sums. A meeting was arranged with considerable secrecy. The day came—then the offer.

"You, with all your ability to design accurately, should not be wasting your time on trivial things. See, here are the twenty- and forty-rouble Kerensky notes which the Japanese are making, and they are not at all cleverly done. You can do a plate much better than these, and we can make a royal clean-up out of it. What do you say?"

To his very marked disappointment I had to refuse, as I had not yet "hit" the counterfeiting level.

During the early months of 1919 conditions became quite different at Nikolsk-Ussurisky with the

presence of so many international contingents. There were Japanese, American and Chinese troops, besides the big units of Czechs and prisoners. With the coming of March there was a new bomb thrown into our midst. All the able-bodied prisoners had been gradually ordered out in large groups for work in various places. Then followed the command that the invalids of the second class, that is, those not so seriously incapacitated by their wounds or otherwise, should also prepare to go to the copper-mines to the north. We were to leave on the morning of the second day. That meant action.

Three of the younger prisoners decided with me that we were not meant to be miners and would never make a career of it. It seemed to us much better to shift for ourselves. So we took our belongings and stole away to the station the following morning. Not a chance, however, to reach even the platform, because of the ring of Czech guards.

"There's another station nine versts to the east," I suggested. "Why not a morning walk?" We trudged away and arrived only to find there was also a small Cossack guard on duty there. We waited for two or three hours for the train that never came. The boys began to upbraid me and show signs of faint-heartedness at our poor prospects for food that day.

"Never mind," I assured them, "just you wait and see. We shall dine like lords today." I had not the least idea how the miracle would be worked, but I felt their failing hearts—and mine—needed some stimulant.

Finally along came one of the Cossacks and ques-

tioned us. What were we doing there? Waiting for our work train. And what sort of a train was that? Oh, one that was coming in a few minutes. Well, an officer would have to be brought to pass upon our case. The boys began to show signs of wild fear.

"But all they can do is to put us in jail, and that's a thousand times more agreeable than work in dripping copper-mines." Just then, far up the line, the smoke of a locomotive came into sight. Would it reach us before the officer? Fortunately we had kept a goodly distance from the station as a bit of strategic precaution. Gradually the train came up and finally came to a stop at the tank to take on water. We were just opposite the dining-car. The door opened and a big, fat, pompous cook filled it from side to side. I looked at him again.

"Györfi! Look here!" I cried.

"Mr. Imrey! Great heavens, is that you?" came from one of my fellow-inmates of the hospital at Lemberg.

"Quickly," I interrupted him, "have you got a job for us?"

"Yes, for you—and I can take another as a dishwasher."

"Come on, boys," I called back, as I grabbed the handrail and started up. Györfi had been a sergeant-major in my own regiment and was the type that had a wholesome amount of fear at doing anything that might get him into trouble. He was thoroughly frightened.

"The captain will have to give you permission. I can't do it by myself," he protested. But I shoved



past him, spurred by the thought of that Cossack officer at our coat-tails. Once safely inside, I looked back to see the soldier searching along the cars to find his group to question. The captain in charge of the kitchen came in.

"Where are they?" he asked. "Do you know them?"

"This is the cook," replied Györfi now with considerable pride, pointing to me.

"Oh, and you have two waiters also. That's good." Then we knew we were safe, and Györfi began to take credit for fine acumen in picking his staff. One of the boys was an artist and preferred to be dishwasher rather than serve. That seemed beneath his dignity. Pifi—for he was one of the other two—had thought to be cook, but, remembering his tendency to fry fish with their scales on, thought better of it when among my friends and left me the rôle.

Our first job was to clean up the remnants of the last meal by gobbling down huge pieces of roast chicken, ducks and steak. We even had some vodka to wash these along.

"Didn't I tell you we would dine royally?" I grudgingly took time out to remind my crew. Pifi hadn't leisure for more than a grin. He was at home immediately. Then, between mouthfuls, I asked the chef on whose train we were.

"What, you don't know?" he answered, swelling up with pride and importance. "Why, it is the train of His Excellency General Ivanoff-Rinoff the Commander-in-Chief of all the Siberian army."

"Whew! that murderer who . . ." Györfi blanched, put his hand to his mouth and stopped me.

"We are watched! Do you want us all killed?"

So this was the famous train! It made many mysterious trips between Manchuria and Vladivostok, and, as I later discovered, for no other purpose than to rob the little Chinese towns along the line and take the loot back to Vladivostok for sale. Even the foodstuffs for the kitchen were often stolen from Chinese, not a few of whom were beaten up in the process.

On one occasion I received a large box containing one hundred eggs, which had been stolen from a native shop. I opened several and found them all black inside and emitting a most sickening, spicy odor. I just kept a few of them to show to the officer-in-charge why I could not use them. At the next station a Chinese vegetable-seller came up into the car and, seeing the rotten eggs, offered me a dollar apiece for them. Thinking he was joking, I replied:

"Not less than five dollars." To my surprise, he counted out the money, took one of the eggs and then asked if he might not have just one more for the price. Naturally I let him have a second, laughing all the time at his infatuation for my garbage.

"Why do you pay that much for eggs?" I asked him. He looked at me first in surprise; then, as though he knew I was joking, said:

"Ah, you knew, fine opium, allee same." Pifi was just behind me and added his comment:

"Good Lord, you've thrown away enough opium

to have taken us all home!" Just the same, I wasn't sorry, somehow.

There was other "strange baggage" on that unusual train. Rumor had it that there was a Red spy among the personnel, because there were frequent attacks on the train and always under favorable conditions for the enemy. For some unknown reason the engine-driver seemed to slow down just at the critical time, and other similar signs pointed the same way. To my utter surprise one of the officers confessed to me one day that he was Red and wanted to know my own feelings. It was one of the most difficult situations I had been compelled to face. If I answered affirmatively, he might be double-crossing me; if in the negative, he might be marking me as one to be put out of the way, when the final exposure came.

"I don't feel much one way or the other," I told him in my effort to be diplomatic as well as truthful. "I am a prisoner of war. There are enough people mixed up in the turmoil now without having us added."

One evening a little later I came upon the Lett who was oiler and general handyman for the train in the act of making signals with a flashlight. He jumped back when he saw me and warned me that, if I "peeped" on him, I would swing for it. Now that I knew we had both colors on board I wondered when the explosion would come.

Pifi and the other "valiant" in our quartette thought one day it had arrived. I always made it a

point to have a loaf of bread and some meat wrapped up and ready to give to any prisoner of war whom we might meet along the line. That particular day a transport-train was just about to start before I discovered it. I ran in, grabbed the bundle and bolted. Pifi called excitedly to know what was up.

"It's the Reds!" I shouted back in jest. As I returned I found him gone and only a foot sticking out of the ice-box, while his companion was flat on the floor. It took some time before we could drag him out and still more for us to stop laughing.

But he was not a bad lad, was kind-hearted and a constant source of fun. He used to wait on an old general who had been picked up in distress at one of the stations and was being cared for by his fellow-commander. Pifi always wangled him an extra helping of pudding or a liberal serving of soup, cajoling the chef into all sorts of favors for his charge. One day there came a change. Bursting with fury, he demanded:

"Give me a rotten piece of meat," as he seized a bit of left-over beef, poured some dirty water on it and added flavoring from a bottle of hair-tonic that stood on the shelf. "There you old scoundrel, eat that! You'll get worse in hell!"

"What's the matter, Pifi?"

"Just imagine! The rotten fish! After we had treated him like a princess, he just said that all the prisoners of war should have been hanged long ago! The crotchety old villain!"

Some months after that I saw the old general selling cakes on the pier at Yokohama, but I could

not communicate the news to Pifi, as he had gone out of my life.

One evening a special dinner was ordered. Our guest of honor, a tall, bony man with a huge, crooked nose and ferret-like eyes, came into the kitchen to watch us prepare part of the meal. He was none other than Admiral Kolchak, one of the few courageous men of the anti-revolutionary party. Like the majority of the great leaders in this movement, such as Denikin and Horvat, he was a trained engineer. It is not strange their orderly minds should have made the greatest efforts to counteract the chaos produced by the Reds.

Another traveler came into our kitchen one day, under-sized, skinny and with a gnome-like face that carried an idiotic expression. I instinctively felt an aversion to the fellow and gave him a push out of my way. He asked for some tea and, when it was ready, made me take a sip of it to assure him that it was not poisoned. Leaning against the wall of the swaying car, there he was, Kalmukoff, self-styled general and universally acknowledged murderer, the worst product of the civil war. He was the one who brought at least fifteen hundred men and women to their death and even boasted that he had himself accounted for more than eight hundred of these with his own hand.

The train life and the rôle of chef's assistant was not entirely congenial to my viewpoint of the moment and was not forwarding my plans to get out of the country. Then, too, I was seized with some kind of fever and thought best to return to the camp

the next time the train passed Nikolsk. It was not a moment too soon, for I was very weak when I finally slipped down from my railway-gallery, bade good-bye to Györfi and tried to go to camp. Not so easily, however. The guard thought it better to keep me under surveillance until the morning. So they put me in the jail for the night! And such a night! There was a Red spy, whom the guards beat unmercifully, a woman smuggler, whom they stripped and treated with what might be termed very poor manners, and Zoltan, the lazy dish-washer on the train, who had decided to return to camp with me. He had always been our prima donna in the theatrical performances at Achinsk, taking especially well the rôles of young peasant girls, and had a very strong appeal for me.

When morning came he helped me to the camp—and to unconsciousness! For I passed out the moment I lay down on my heap of straw and did not come to for three days. A short period of consciousness, and again my mind became veiled for a second interval of similar length. When I awoke this time, one of the young members of my family was beside me, asking:

“Daddy, what can I get for you?”

“Water, water!” I remember answering him, for I was burning with thirst. There had been only four or five in the barracks when we arrived. Now there were many. A labor-battalion had come back from some outside work and were in tatters. My young “son” had his toes through his shoes, as did most of the others. For some three weeks I lay with no one

but him to care for me through what proved to be a very enervating attack of influenza.

As it wore off, we had to start some business again; so this time I became a paper-hanger. From that I moved up to hotel-decorator and embellished the Grand Hotel with murals, one of which nearly cost me my life. I was making a fantasy of birds on a corridor leading to the winter-garden, when a drunken Cossack officer came out and challenged my technique. He seized my brush and was going to show how it should be done, when I grabbed it from his hand and turned back to my work. I did not see what happened behind me, but was told afterward that he was in the act of drawing his sword to strike me down, when one of his fellows pinned his arms and saved me from this rather drastic manner of expressing a difference of opinion on the subject of art.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE PACIFIC AT LAST!

**B**UT Vladivostok was my goal all this time, and to Vladivostok I finally made my way. It was not so easy, however, as it is to say it. There was a rigid Czech and White guard maintained at every station, who demanded and inspected the traveling-permits of every one who was not one of their officers. So I had to use a ruse to circumvent them. At each station they jumped on the steps, before the train had stopped, and entered the cars. As they came in one side, I had already slipped down on the other and was chatting with some railroad-worker, or wandering along among the freight-cars. Once the train was moving, I mounted again from the "off" side. This worked well enough until we reached Vladivostok, where, when stopped by the guard as I was making my way out across the tracks, I an-



nounced myself as from the Ivanoff-Rinoff train and showed the pass which I had been careful to keep against just such need. Then, making my way to the round-house, I found an exit guarded by an Italian soldier. He was so delighted to hear some of his own tongue that he willingly gave me passage in exchange for it. And I was free—for a moment.

It was midnight. I had two friends working in the Fortifications Staff printing-establishment and went in search of them. Though entirely hospitable in spirit, they had no free bed for me, so put me up on the traveling paper-frame of the big press on which the official sheet was printed. They warned me to be up betimes in the morning, before the press should be switched on, lest I be run through for an artist's proof of the morning gazette.

The next day I found two young German boys who were living in the Czech citizens' barrack, awaiting transport home, and who offered me a bed near theirs. My night's lodging cost me my watch and the few roubles I still had, both of which went to enrich some light-handed neighbor.

That made me sad and low-spirited. Having no carfare, I hooked a ride on a French truck and went into the city. I had received some addresses from a friend who was supposed to live at one of them, but everybody seemed to have moved as frequently as I had. So I stood about the park until a single seat was vacated and dropped into it. The place seemed so comfortable that I began to consider it as my permanent address, when two figures stopped square in front of me.

"What are you doing here? We were talking of you just this afternoon." They were two countrymen, one a young doctor, who was practising in Vladivostok.

"How did you get here? Are you doing anything?"

"Not that I know of."

"Would you come along to the theater? We have a box."

"If it's a comedy. I need to laugh." I answered with much more seriousness than they ever guessed. And they made me laugh in more ways than one; for they set my feet from that moment on a happier way, which carried me out of the forest of death and despair that had surrounded the black years.

They introduced me to the manager of the theater before the performance and sold him one of my sketches for forty yen (twenty dollars). Then they next presented me to the prima donna, Miss Noya Gloria, which was a real experience for me at that moment. After the fictitious ones we had had in our prison-camp theater, most of them disguised by my own hand, it gave me a peculiar thrill to meet this sentient one, with her womanly grace and winning smile—and no big red hands sticking out.

After the performance we were invited by the manager to his popular cabaret, Bibabo, where the gracious prima donna signaled us to sup with her in her loge. We had no more than exchanged the first formalities, when a stern-looking officer entered and was introduced as—the chief of the militia, or police! What is more, Miss Gloria took pleasure in

recounting to him how cleverly I had managed to get out without permission. He invited me to call on him the following day, saying that he would "fix me up." I appreciated his invitation but thought better about keeping it, as I had been so repeatedly "fixed up" that I had no need of further treatment.

Instead, I went on the following day to the Japanese headquarters, where I had a friend working as interpreter, with the object of securing some sort of identification papers as an artist. Fortunately the general's adjutant was a great lover of art and authorized the issuance of a card for me, on which my friend added the unusual sentence that, in case of attack by others, the Japanese were to come to my defense. I put the card in my pocket without realizing what it might mean to me in the near future.

Just after this I was made a member of the Balaganshchik, or the Russian Artists' Club, in which David Burliuk, founder of the Russian futuristic art, was the dominating figure. In it he brought together all the artists in the place, regardless of nationality or position. We shortly had an exhibition in which enough of my pictures sold to lift me momentarily from the want of the indigent. Better still, it brought me commissions for other work, especially a set of black and white sketches of the Vladivostok harbor.

One day, when I was just finishing one of these, a half-intelligent Russian soldier came up and asked me:

"Who told you to come here?" Not reaping the

kind of answer which he expected, he hurried away with the challenging admonition:

"We'll see about that!" I finished my sketch and was just putting up my work, when a brute of a giant Cossack officer came rapidly toward me, with his wicked *nagaika* ready to strike. I turned my head just in time to gather my things together and make a start before he was upon me.

"*Vstavai, sobaka!* (Halt, you dog!)" he shouted in a thundering voice, at the same time raising his whip to strike. I grabbed his wrist to check the blow. A small group of Japanese soldiers and other bystanders soon gathered to watch the fray. In as quiet tones as I could muster, I said:

"Aren't you ashamed to make a scene like this in a public street before these Japanese?"

"To hell with those monkey-faced Japs!" he roared. And with this he started to fight. Avoiding him, I succeeded in drawing out my card and handing it to a Japanese officer who had just joined the circle.

"That little squirt can't help you," he said, as he charged me again. I managed to explain to the Japanese that I was a Hungarian officer. This, added to the insult which the Cossack had just heaped upon the Nipponese, was sufficient to stir the little officer's wrath. The result was amazing. The small man flew like a wildcat at the face of the surprised Russian, slapped, kicked and beat him, before the big man could gather himself for a lunge. The Japanese soldiers, seeing their commandant in action, joined the fray and helped to drag, kick and

push him in the direction of their staff-headquarters. I kept close to the group until near their goal, when I slipped off down a side street and never learned the fate of my big assailant.

This was not to be my only obligation to the Japanese. I soon went to the prison-camp they maintained at Pervaya Riechka, the most model, comfortable and attractive camp I saw in all Siberia. There I found many of my friends, notably one of my associates in the technical school, and spent six days with them in a round of delightful diversions and entertainment. True, I had been compelled to smuggle myself into this haven by taking a pail from one of the prisoners sent out to get water for the kitchen; but once inside I had not the slightest difficulty.

Two striking cases, illustrating dramatically two opposing types of Japanese character, occurred while I was in touch with this camp.

The first was that of a captain who saw one of our Hungarian officers in the town and asked him how he managed to get out of camp, when they supposed they had the prisoners so well guarded. Our officer confessed that there was a hole under the fence where the long grass protected them. Would he show it to the captain? He consented. The last words of the Oriental to the Hungarian were that he did not believe escape was possible in this way. As our prisoner-officer emerged on the farther side of the fence, the Japanese gave the order to the guard "Shoot!"—and that was the end of the demonstration!

In the second instance, to which I was witness, a Japanese under-officer ordered the prisoners to move a freight-car to a certain place for unloading. They protested that the grade began there and that the car, having no brakes, would run downhill and get out of hand. The Japanese disregarded them and ordered the car moved on. In an instant it was too late. It gathered headway, rushed down the grade, jumped the track and severely injured a prisoner who was inside it.

In the hospital the little under-officer and others of his associates came constantly to inquire for the injured man and to bring him little gifts. Each time the man opened his eyes, something was offered him or was sent for, in the hope of showing him some measure of their regret. Then, when hope began to fade, the little under-officer remained through the night and all the following day near the prisoner's bed, watching with anxious expression every move that might be indicative of recovery. Finally the end came. The little man smiled in a most strange manner, as is their custom in times when one would expect only tears, bowed low to the figure on the bed and went slowly and silently out.

An hour later the body of the little Samurai was found in the room where he had performed the expiation which the code of his ancestors imposed upon him—the hara-kiri. He had even added the last touch of courage and physical endurance by wiping clean the sacrificial blade and laying it in its proper ceremonial place at his side, before the body

gave way and fell forward in the last bow of penitence.

On their part the prisoners, without a word of suggestion from their senior officers, attended to a man the last rites of one who had taught them what it means in the land of the Mikado to be a true soldier.

But my own contacts with the Japanese were not to be limited to these cases and to these few weeks. It was already the autumn of 1919. For those who may wonder why we prisoners of war were not yet repatriated, it should be explained that the question was largely one of ships. Also, the Czechs were given the preference. Several English vessels came to embark them.

In preparation for my own return I gathered all the work possible throughout the summer months. I painted portraits for the Japanese consul and some Japanese merchants, for Americans and others; sold many of my Siberian pictures; arranged the scenery for groups of living pictures and, finally, decorated the hall for the Sports' Club ball. From these and many other tasks I gathered enough to pay the necessary eight hundred yen for the bond the Japanese required of those entering the country from Russia or Siberia. Just when I was on the eve of being ready to go, the Mikado's government inconsiderately raised the price to fourteen hundred and threw me back into the seemingly interminable Siberian problems.

At this juncture Köves, who still represented the

Red Cross among the prisoners, turned up from Nikolsk with word that one ———, an accredited representative of one of the great international relief-organizations, was preparing to charter ships and take us prisoners to Europe for two hundred dollars each. So I immediately went to investigate this new prospect, which seemed to bring home very near. I signed on with great enthusiasm and only awaited the day when I should sail away from all that Siberia had come to mean to me.

When I visited the ship, a Japanese steamer, to see what our accommodations would be, I was aghast. They were not fit for the veriest coolies—and to think of going through the heat of the Red Sea in them was intolerable. I began to investigate and discovered that the Czechs had been taken home in English ships with comfortable accommodations for sixty dollars apiece, also that ——— had already collected from their families in Austria-Hungary the two-hundred-dollar fares for some twelve hundred of our prisoners, in many cases at great sacrifice. I further found that ——— intended to pack fifteen thousand into the steamer, which should not have carried more than eight or nine thousand at most. All my suspicions and judgments about the character of any voyage under those conditions were later confirmed by letters from some of those who went. One of them wrote that the hardships of the Siberian prison-camps paled before the sufferings and suffocation of the days in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. Conditions were such that each



passenger could go on deck only once in three days and that for a limited time.

Everything seemed to be against us Hungarians, but there was nothing through all our prisoner days that aroused my wrath as this did. Filled with the injustice of it all, I went back to —— and faced him with the facts. He simply answered me that I need not join them, if I did not wish, and that I had nothing more to say in the matter. But I could not let it rest at that. I answered him:

“Yes, I have something more to say, and it is that you are the most unscrupulous scoundrel that I have met in Siberia! The only open door left to the prisoner is through such a humanitarian organization as you represent, and you are trading upon your position in it to make money out of the misery of the helpless and the unfortunate.”

So I withdrew from what had seemed so bright a hope and turned to another channel. Korean fishermen could be hired for fifty yen to set one down in some small village along the coast of the Hermit Kingdom. In desperation I made an arrangement with one of these and paid down my bargain money of ten yen. When I had stowed most of my belongings, I went for a last time into the city to buy provisions.

On the street I came face to face with a young friend who was employed in a firm of importers and exporters.

“What, you are still here, with all your money and your acquaintances?”

"Not for long. I have a Korean fishing-boat just waiting to sail. We shall be off soon."

"Never! Come along to the office. You travel first class!" I accompanied him to his chief, Mr. Sterelny, who told me to return the next morning, when a steamer would be sailing and when matters would somehow be fixed up for me.

Shortly after nine the following morning, he handed me five hundred yen to add to the thousand I had accumulated, saying that he required no receipt, as he knew that he "was dealing with a gentleman." That was a new word in my cosmos of the last years. It came from him as my passport to a new life. I was no longer a prisoner. I was free, admitted again into the society of my fellow-man on a basis of equality.

But the ticket-office closed at ten and the steamer sailed at twelve. I rushed to book my passage, and then Hajnoczy, who was with me, raced with me down to the waiting Korean boat, helped me disembark my kit and saw me on the steamer. Still I could not quite believe it would sail before some unexpected turn of events should hold us up. They came to examine my papers. All were in order! Now only those lines had to drop, and we should be away!

Finally they splashed. The ship was moving. My eyes rested on the hill where I had so often sat gazing out to sea and wondering whether I should ever sail its blue waters. As I watched the mountain slopes sink quietly away into the horizon, thought seemed blotted out, only feelings surged within me. Then a low line of dark clouds veiled all that was

left of Russia. In that moment I had no grudge or resentment toward a single soul. I felt only pity, unmeasurable pity, for all who were left on the farther side of that bank of lowering clouds.

Three days later I was in Yokohama, safe and sound. My first care was to deliver to Mr. Sterelny's brother the five hundred yen which had gained me entrance into the country, grateful beyond words to the man who had loaned me out of hand a sum which was then the equivalent of half my worldly fortune. Shortly afterward I sat sipping tea in a dainty tea-house on the Bluff, looking down upon the streets of the busy city and its moving crowds, so unconscious of their own peaceful attitude, their cleanly appearance, their stately bowings and their contagious cheerfulness.

I raised a cup of tea to my lips. Startled by a sudden thought, I put it down. Where had I been all these years, these best, creative years? . . .



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE COST OF IT ALL

AND was that all? Is the record complete and well-proportioned? Far from it! What I have here set down is only the chronicle of a small portion of one individual's experiences, taken out of the great mass as simply indicative and representative. Whole trips, like our attempted escape to the south through Minusinsk, have not even been mentioned, because they were but duplicates of the same sad theme.

Also it must not be thought that the apparent jauntiness of parts of the record was the keynote of the whole. There is little use in picturing the depression that so constantly hung over and dominated us. I cannot, however, feel justified in letting the chronicle go from my hand without a summariz-

ing reference to the more tragic side of that great Siberian episode.

Three million prisoners of war were sent into Siberia; one million five hundred thousand lived to come out! What could possibly have accounted for the loss of such a vast multitude of human souls? The causes were several.

The Russians before the revolution killed some, not a great number; their neglect slew tens of thousands. One of our first nerve-racking shocks at Achinsk was the news one morning that a group of invalid prisoners, brought in the evening before and left momentarily in an unroofed barrack, had been forgotten by their guard. When the morning came—there could be only one result in that winter climate.

In mines and elsewhere many were set to work in open pits or underground, where caving earth buried them. Not infrequently those taken out to work were so poorly clothed and shod that the merciless cold set its seal upon them. Epidemics and disease added to the tragic total under conditions that seem almost impossible in these days of supposed humanitarianism.

At Akmolinsk typhus broke out in a barrack. It was surrounded by Russian soldiers, and no one was allowed to enter or to leave it. The sufferers were left to care for themselves as best they could. When the dread disease appeared in a second, it too was included within the line of the guard. Gradually the whole camp came into the fatal cordon. Of the thousands of prisoners there, about eighty per cent met their end in this way. To the total of typhus,

cholera, tuberculosis and other diseases starvation added a huge and sickening number.

Then came the struggle between the Reds and the Whites. Many prisoners were recruited for the army under conditions explained in an earlier chapter and paid the penalty they expected might easily be theirs. When the Whites and Czechs swept eastward, the executions were terrible.

Being a Hungarian and as such a member of the nation which the Czechs have looked upon as their most bitter enemy, I have no desire to raise any of the old political controversies which have bred such strong feeling between our two nations. Yet, try as I may to put myself in their position during those days of their trek across Siberia, I cannot find, even in the polluted springs of hatred, justification for their wholesale murdering of our people, defenseless and at their mercy. They not only slew out of hand the Hungarian Cultural Committee of highly educated men at Krasnoyarsk—seven of them were from our Achinsk group—but committed an even more unbelievable act in the killing of seventeen Hungarian teachers and their two helpers who formed the municipal orchestra at Habarovsk. The following day an equal number of Czechs had taken their places and were interpreting beauty to the populace through the medium of music! That even war, with its immeasurable possibilities for destroying character, should have been able so to turn men's souls black stunned us into a stupefaction between terror and animalism.

In their retreat from the country we were not their only victims. They robbed the Russians right and left, taking away shiploads of copper, patent-leather and various other kinds of merchandise. They looted our Red Cross supply of shirts at Beresovka, our Y. M. C. A. stores of soup, milk, prunes and the like at Achinsk. Their crossing of the continent left a trail of blood and hatred behind them.

The souls of scores of my friends and hundreds of my countrymen seem to range themselves before me as I write, urging their protest against the cruel intervention of the Czechs, beyond all the laws of war, that took them to their deaths instead of to the homes of which they dreamed! I am not of a vengeful nature, so that I would not seek vengeance of any sort; yet the nightmares born of seeing my fellow-prisoners go down before their rifles will not quit me and let me rest with this weight upon my mind.

In the last analysis one should not look to justice to bring satisfaction, for that is but a remnant of the cave-man spirit of vendetta. But there is such a thing as atonement, and one could wish and pray that somehow, some way there might be an atonement made, in the spirit of true contrition, that would do all that is now possible to solace the homes made desolate by these wanton acts of barbarism. In this plea for expiation I know that I voice the prayer of thousands of my fellows, living and dead.

In the smaller field of my own individual nature,

you ask, perhaps, what were the changes that these years of Siberian prison-life wrought?

The greatest change was simply one of degree—the intensification of the feeling that one's art, if it be firmly grounded in one's soul, will persist through everything and bring relief, when nothing else avails. While brilliant men of the non-creative professions languished and disintegrated mentally in their helplessness, those of us who worked with our hands in the creative field had something to help stabilize the mind and keep it more nearly normal.

Also it was clearly proven that dependence could not be placed upon Red Cross or any other organized assistance from without to save either body or mind, but that the effort must come from within, from one's own instinct for self-preservation.

In the realm of the physical there was manifested a most distinct deepening of sensitiveness, especially of pity for every living being. During my first months in Japan I could not touch meat, for the thought of the killing that it represented, and used frequently to cross and walk on the other side of the street to avoid passing a butcher-shop.

Also I could not endure association with those who were always happy. Happiness in the world of that day seemed but wanton effrontery and grated upon me. I gathered my household from among the suffering—a house-maid who had been maltreated and came from the hospital in a precarious condition; a "boy" who was an orphan and had never known a real home.

One of the little kittens got caught by a closing



shoji and died in spite of all we could do for it. It was days before I recovered from the vicarious pains I suffered for it.

I could not even hear a crying child without going to see what could possibly be the matter and what must be done to relieve it.

Perhaps that vast land of the exiles, that great sepulcher of happiness, in spite of all it took from me, has left an attenuated degree of the super-sensitiveness of those first months that may help, in the magic of its efficacy, to instill a greater richness into the years—to counterbalance all that was thrown into the other scale.

## F I N I S

